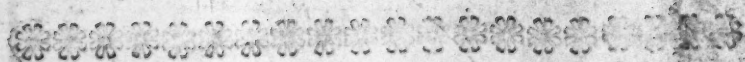




A GENUINE
A C C O U N T
OF THE
M A N,
Whose Hands and Legs rotted off.





A GENUINE

ACCOUNT

OF THE



N^o

of the Hands and Legs of



A GENUINE
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
M A N,

Whose Hands and Legs rotted off,

In the PARISH of

King's-Swinford in Staffordshire ;

Where he died, *June 21, 1677.*

Carefully collected by J. A. ILLINGWORTH, B. D. K

To which is added,

(Occasion'd by this remarkable Instance of Divine Vengeance)

A DISCOURSE concerning God's Judgments ;
preach'd (in Substance) at *Old Swinford* in *Wor-*
cestershire, a neighbouring Parish to *King's-Swin-*
ford.

By SIMON FORD, D. D.

And Rector of the said Parish.

To the WHOLE is prefix'd,

The Rev. Mr. *William Whiston's* remarkable Mention of
this extraordinary Affair ; with his Reasons for the Republi-
cation thereof, taken from his MEMOIRS.

L O N D O N,

Reprinted, from the first EDITION in 1678; and sold by
R. GRIFFITHS, in *St. Paul's Church-yard*; Mr. EDDOWES,
Bookseller in *Salop*; Mr. PARSONS, Bookseller in *Newcastle,*
Staffordshire; and by all other Booksellers in *Great-Britain* and
Ireland.

A GENUINE
ACCOUNT
OF THE
M. A. N.

1



By SIR JOHN...
And...
The Rev. Mr. ...
...
...
...
...



*The following Mention of the ensuing
Narrative and Sermon is taken from
Mr. WHISTON's Memoirs, pag. 4.*

“ BUT before I proceed to my own History,
“ I cannot omit to mention the Relations
“ that came to my Father at *Norton*, when I
“ was but a Child under ten Years of Age, con-
“ cerning that wonderful and undeniable Instance
“ of the Punishment of one *John Duncalf*, of
“ *King's-Swinsford*, about thirty Miles from us
“ in *Staffordshire*; of which I well remember
“ we had several Attestations at the very Time,
“ either from Eye and Ear-witnesses, or those
“ who had spoken with Eye and Ear-witnesses.
“ This *John Duncalf* had cursed himself upon
“ his stealing a Bible, and had wished, that if
“ he stole it, his Hands might rot off before he
“ died; which proved most true, and most af-
“ fecting to the whole Country and Neighbour-
“ hood.—The exact Narrative itself, written
“ by Mr. *Illingworth*, and the judicious Sermon
“ that accompanies it, preached by Dr. *Ford*,
“ are now before me, and ought, in this scepti-
“ cal Age, to be reprinted, and recommended to
“ all

“ all who either deny, or doubt of the Interpo-
 “ sition of a particular divine Providence some-
 “ times, for the Punishment of notorious wicked
 “ Men, even in these last Days. And I am, and
 “ have long been, of the great Lord *Verulam's*
 “ Opinion, here justly referred to by *Dr. Ford*,
 “ Page 75, who takes Notice of it as a Defect in
 “ the historical Part of Learning, that there is
 “ not extant an impartial and well-attested *Histo-*
 “ *ria Nemefios*, as he calls it; an Account of the
 “ most remarkable Judgments of God upon the
 “ Wicked, and complains of it accordingly.”



TO THE
Rev. *S. Ford*, D.D.

RECTOR of
Old-Swinford in Worcestershire.

S I R,

*B*EING importuned by divers
Gentlemen, Ministers, and others
of our Neighbourhood, to draw up a full
Narrative and Account of that late sad
Providence which hath filled the Hearts
and Mouths of the Country round about
us, the Fame whereof is also spread into
remote Parts, I was at last prevailed
with to endeavour their Satisfaction:
And the rather because of a general Ru-
mour in the Country, that the Man had
declared several Things to me of near
Concernment to himself, which he con-
cealed from all other Visitants. That I
might not therefore suffer such Reports

to pass uncertain, nor be wanting in that which was by some urged as my Duty; I did, by travelling at several Times above sixty Miles in the Parts adjacent, inquire into divers particular Circumstances, which I was not before fully clear in; and have now at last set all down in plain Words, suitable to such an Account, that the Meanest concerned to know and make good Use of the Providence, might at first reading clearly understand it.

Sir, That I address this to you, is, that I may take an Opportunity to make my hearty Acknowledgments for your learned and useful Discourses in the Pulpit upon this Occasion, to the general Satisfaction of your Hearers; and I must, in my own Name, and many of theirs, intreat you would make the Substance of them more publick from the Press, that the Readers may learn not to be too censorious in Things of this Nature, nor yet to pass by so signal a Providence without that just Observation it deserves, and due Reverence toward that God who is known by the Judgments which he executeth, as you have fully shewed us.

I hope,

I hope, Sir, I invite you to nothing but what your own Judgment accounts worthy your Labour; and I am confident it will be no mean Addition to your elaborate Services of God and his Church. In which, that you may be long continued for his Glory, and the Good of his People, shall be the hearty Prayer of,

Reverend S I R,

Your most affectionate,

Though unworthy Friend,

To honour and serve you,

J. ILLINGWORTH.

in
I have the pleasure to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst.
and in reply to inform you that it will be
forwarded to the proper authorities for
their consideration. I am, Sir, very
truly, your obedient servant,
J. M. W. T. S.

Respectfully,
J. M. W. T. S.

Your most obedient servant,
J. M. W. T. S.

Thomson University, Friend,

To honor and love you,

J. M. W. T. S.

B. 2

A just Narrative or Account of the Man whose Hands and Legs rotted off in the Parish of Kings-Swinford in Staffordshire, where he died, June 21, 1677.

RICHARD DUNCALF of *Codsall* Parish, not far from *Wolverhampton*, in the County of *Stafford*, dying many Years since (and his Wife also) left behind them many Children, and but slender Provision for them.

One of their Sons, *John Duncalf*, bound himself an Apprentice to *Thomas Gibbons* of *Kings-Swinford* in the same County, Wheelwright. When he had served his Master two Years and seven Months (or thereabouts) he and his Fellow Apprentice stealing from their Master a considerable Quantity of Iron, delivered it to a third Person, who promised to conceal it from their Master; but being all brought before the Right Honourable the Lord *Ward* of *Dudley-Castle*, upon Examination severally, they accused each other, and confessed the whole: By which Means there was found concealed (as *Tho. Gibbons* saith) 26 Pounds of old Iron, besides more that was wrought up, new Waggon-Nails, Ends of Bars, &c. Upon their Confession the Lord *Ward* sent them to the House of Correction, about *October 14, 1675*. But the other Apprentice being dangerously sick there, and this *John Duncalf* pretending, at least, to

be sick also, they two were set at Liberty the Week following. After which Time this said *John Duncalf* refused to come again to his former Service (saying he would never set his Feet in *Kings-Swinford*, whilst he lived) but offering and engaging to pay to his Master forty Shillings, his Master and he gave Releases to each other; by which Means this young Man (who was then full twenty Years of Age, and at more Liberty than formerly whilst an Apprentice) gave himself up to licentious Courses, viz. (as he confessed to me, April 26, 1677) to *Idleness, Stealing, Lying, Cursing, Swearing, Drunkenness, and Uncleanneſs with Women*; which last, he said, was not by committing actual Fornication or *Adultery*, but in the Thoughts of his Heart, and by lascivious Words and Gestures, whereby he had endeavoured to tempt them to Lewdness in divers Places. I must therefore here clear myself and him (from an unjust Rumour and Report common (as I am informed) in the Country hereabouts, which many People yet believe, viz. [That he confessed some Things to me which he desired might be concealed whilst he lived, as, that he had committed a Rape upon a young Person, and afterwards murdered her: That he was guilty of Buggery, or lying with Beasts, &c.] I do therefore openly declare to all, that these were groundless Rumours or Reports, and I do assure them he never desired me to conceal any Thing he said or confessed to me, nor did he ever speak to me of any such Things as these, which some have reported, and others believed. But the Faults above-mentioned seemed to lie as a heavy Burthen upon his Conscience, when he judged God's Hand

Hand was severely chastizing him for them, and all his other Impieties; among which, his constant *Profaneness* had not been the least, in that, *although he could both read and write, yet he had* (as he said to me) *a long Time neglected all Manner of Service and Worship of God, as well on the Lord's Day as other Days, and that both in private and publick.* It is said, he *stole* many Things to supply his growing Necessities (which his Idleness and Intemperance brought upon him) chiefly *Bibles*; and the rather because they would soonest be bought by others. About *January* the 6th, 1676-7, coming to the House of *Humphrey Babb*, living at the *Grange-Mill*, about three Miles from *Wolverhampton*, he begged of *Margaret*, the said *Humphrey's* Wife, Victuals and small Drink. The Woman having formerly known him, and compassionating his present Condition, gave him freely such as she had; but whilst she stooped to draw Drink for him, he *stole her Bible*, (as he confessed to her afterwards.) This *Bible* he sold for three Shillings to a Maid of *John Downings*, who lives near the *Heath-Forge*, not far from the Place where he stole it. By which Means, not long after, *Humphrey Babb's* Wife heard of her Bible, demanded it of the Maid that bought it, and making her some Allowance toward what she paid for it, received it again long before either of them saw him, or heard what was become of him: But this being noised in the Country thereabouts, one *Henry Evans* told his Father *Thomas Evans* (commonly called *Painter*) who lives near *Henly* or *Himly*, (they both knew him) what *John Duncalf* had done: At which the said *John Duncalf*,

calf, when he heard of it, was very angry, and gave out threatning Words against the young Man; but being charged with it by them, he did not only deny it with some Fierceness, but execrated and cursed himself, *wishing his Hands might rot off*, if that were true (as the said *Thomas Evans* testifies); and *John Bennet* his Keeper saith, he often heard him say to Gentlemen that visited him in his Sickness, that he did so curse himself upon that Occasion to *Thomas Evans*. And this he acknowledged of his own Accord to me, and many others, several Times, when he seemed most serious, and in earnest. [*That he so cursed himself, and that immediately upon the Execration, or cursing of himself, he had an inward Horror or trembling upon him, a Dread and Fear of the Divine Majesty, and Justice of God, which Fear and Working of his Conscience continued more or less many Days after.*]

When I asked him (upon this ingenuous Acknowledgment) *why he did not confess his Wickedness, and endeavour that the Bible might be restored to the Owner?* His Answer was, *That the Devil and his own Heart would not suffer him.* Yet this he acknowledged to me, *That within a few Days after that Execration, his Flesh began to look black at the Wrists of his Hands, and so continued divers Weeks before it did sensibly rot.* He went then and wrought with one *Thomas Osborn*, a Joiner in *Dudley*, and, as *Osborn* saith, continued with him about a Fortnight, (*Shrove-Tuesday* being the last Day as he well remembers,) and that it was the last Work that ever he did; which I cannot wonder at, considering what this poor Man said to me concerning him-
self

self in Reference to that Time, viz. *After I had cursed myself about the Bible, I wrought with a Joiner at Dudley; but at that Time I had a Fear and Trembling upon me, which frequently troubled me, and made me have no great Mind to work; and so feeling myself weak and faint, and fearing an Ague or Fever, I went towards my Acquaintance; but in the Way, finding I was unable to go any further, I laid myself down in a Barn (at Parton-Hall, as I remember,) belonging to Sir Walter Wrottesley, and there continued two Days and Nights before I was found; some say he said, at other Times, from Tuesday Night to Friday Morning. Being found, he was kept at the Charge of the Parish of Tettenhall, in which Parton-Hall stands, until the next monthly Meeting of the Justices of the Peace, who, March 27, 1677, by Examination, finding Kings-Swinford to have been the last Place of his Settlement, made an Order he should be carried thither, and maintained by that Parish. There he was received, March 28, and John Bennet appointed to take Care of him; first in a Barn belonging to the Three Crowns (an Inn standing on the Road between Wolverhampton and Kidderminster) and after one Fortnight removed, by the Overseers for the Poor, to the Dwelling-House of the said John Bennet his Keeper, in Wall-Heath-Side. His Flesh at first began to rise in great Lumps or Knots at the Wrists of his Hands, and at his Knees, as his Keeper tells me, and after a little Time to break and run, and shortly after to shrink from the Bones at those Places, at which Time white putrid Matter came out and ran abundantly, causing*

sing exquisite Pain and Torment to this poor Man: And so offensive was the Smell for several Weeks together, that those who came to visit him, who were not only many Hundreds, but 'tis believed Thousands (his Keeper and Neighbours say many Thousands) were not able to abide in the Room with him, nor stand near without the Door, except they had Herbs or other Things at their Mouths and Noses to smell to. The Visitants being so numerous at all Times of the Day, especially on the Lord's Days, it seemed to give him great Disturbance, and made him very unwilling to talk many Times, or answer them any Thing. They moved him once so far to Impatience, when they crowded about him each with a Question, having Herbs and other Things at their Noses, that his Passion made him to forget his own Condition, and wish *their Noses might rot off*, as divers there present assured me; for which I gently, but seriously, reproved him at my next Visit. He seemed to take the Reproof well, acknowledging the Fault of his passionate Expressions towards them, provoked, as he said, by their crowding, impertinent Curiosity, and foolish Questions, or to that Effect; but he had forgot, or would not confess, that he had used those Words about *their Noses rotting off*.

But his Keeper tells me, he would often be very impatient towards the Multitude, and call to him, saying, *John, why dost thou not dash out their Teeth? Dost thou not see how they grin at me?* and the like.

About the twentieth of *April* many little Worms came out of the rotten Flesh, such as
are

are usually seen in dead Corpses, as his Keeper told me; but after he was well washed and cleansed, those ceased, and the Room and Smell was nothing so offensive as formerly; yet all that while, though it was rumoured in the Country, he would never confess his Execration and Wishes against himself, until his Keeper denied to ease him of the Vermin, Lice, &c. that filled his Shirt and Doublet, and continually tormented him. He then first promised, that if his Keeper would cut them off and cleanse him, (he had long before cut off all the Hair of his Head) he would acknowledge the whole Truth, which he then did in Manner as is before related.

And now he began to beg Instruction, and Help to repent, and that some Ministers and others, who came to visit him, would pray for and with him, which many did, both publick Preachers, and others at several Times; and some who lived near him, as I did often. Being asked by me what he desired might be begged of God for him? he returned Answer to this Purpose: *That God would give him Repentance, and Pardon his Sins above-mentioned, viz. Idleness, Stealing, Lying, Cursing, Swearing, Drunkenness, unclean Thoughts, and constant Prophaneness, &c. that he would save him for Christ's Sake, and give him Patience in the mean Time.* I did accordingly endeavour to represent his Case before God, and with humble Earnestness to pray for Mercy for him; and he seemed at that Time to be somewhat affected with the Prayer, &c.

It was about this Time, if I mistake not, that he sent for *Humphrey Babb's* Wife, from whom he stole the Bible, she came, and brought the Maid

Maid he told it to along with her ; to them he confessed the Wrong he had done, and desired they would forgive him ; which the Wife told me she did heartily, and prayed God to forgive him as she did. The Maid seemed to be of the same Mind and Christian Temper.

Very many (as I hinted before) hearing of him, came from all Parts adjacent, and some from Places far distant, to see this sad Spectacle of Divine Justice ; and amongst the rest, some of the *Romanists*, one of which he and his Keeper supposed to be a Priest of that Profession, who was earnest with him to renounce his Religion, and become a Catholick, as he called it, and they would remove him, take Care to heal his Sores, and (said the Man whom they supposed to be the Priest) *I will pawn my Soul for thine, that thou shalt be saved* ; which I am informed is an ordinary Form of Speech amongst the Papists of this Country, when they would persuade Men to their Party. When I inquired of this poor Man, to try him, *why he did not accept of their Offers ?* he answered to this Purpose, *To what End ? How can he pawn his Soul for mine ? None can save me but Christ.*

Others, who had Occasion to travel this Way from *London*, and other Parts far off, West and North, visited him, we hope, not to satisfy their Curiosity so much as to behold a Monument of Divine Severity, and that they might bear Witness, that *although Sentence against an evil Work is not always executed speedily ; yet God leaves not himself without Witness*, in this, as well as former Ages, against Atheism and grand Impiety.

Upon

Upon the 8th of *May* following, both his Legs were fallen off at the Knees, which the poor Man perceived not until his Keeper told him, and shewed them to him, holding them up in his Hands; and his Right Hand, hanging only by some Ligament, by a little Touch of a Knife, was taken off also: The other Hand at the same Time being black as a Shoe, and not much unlike, in the Fancy of some, for Roughness and Hardness, to the Outside of a dried Neat's Tongue. This Hand hanged on a long Time afterwards by some such Thing as the former, and might, 'tis possible, have continued in that Manner until his Death, if he had not desired his Keeper to take that away also as the former, because it was troublesome to him. Now, although putrid Matter frequently issued out at those Places, yet he had not so much Pain as he had formerly for a Month or six Weeks, as he freely confessed; and acknowledged that his Stomach was good, and did digest such Meats as he took, and that he had Evacuations by Siege and Urine as heretofore in his Health.

So that, continuing in this Condition some Weeks, many began to think the Issues might be stopped, and his Life preserved many Years, if regularly ordered. Some of the Parishioners were moved in it, that Physicians and Surgeons might be consulted, and good Advice taken in the Case; but I cannot learn that any Thing was done about it, being judged by some incurable. It is said that he expressed himself to some that visited him in this Manner. That *now the Curse wherewith he had cursed himself being fully come to pass, in that his Hands were rotted off, he was persuaded,*

persuaded, it would go no further. But he forgot that God punished him, not for that Sin only, but for all his great Transgressions, though for that chiefly, as he formerly confessed to me, he believed. At last his Flesh began to waste, and his Spirits to fail; so that visiting him again, and observing some Change in his Flesh and Countenance more than formerly, I laboured to convince him more fully of his Condition, and to persuade him to look up to the great Physician, in whose Hands are the Issues of Life and Death, &c. He seemed to give diligent Attention, and earnestly desired me to pray with him; after Prayers, when I was about to leave him for that Time, he desired I would not forget him in my Prayers, making it also his earnest Request, that I would come again whenever he should send for me, which I promised I would at any Hour, Day or Night. This was *June 16*, and on the *19th*, as his Keeper acknowledgeth, he was in great Anguish and Trouble of Mind, crying out, *What shall I do to save my poor Soul?* with many other Expressions to the same Purpose, being very sick, and fearing his approaching Death. But upon what Account his Keeper would not send for me, in whose hearing he so earnestly desired me to come to him, he knows best, and must answer it, if it was his Fault for private Respects, as is conjectured. On *June 21*, in the Morning, I went again to visit him unsent for, but found him unsensible, and past any further Advice. I staid by him until almost Noon. He lay still, with his Eyes fixed as a dying Man, moved not at any Thing we said to him, but upon

upon pouring into him a little Drink with a Spoon at several Times, he coughed a little, and groaned, and then lay as before. When I saw there was no Probability he would understand any Thing I said, I left him, after Prayer made for him with the Company there present in the House; and had Notice brought me, that he died about two Hours after my Departure from him.

Before I sum up the Whole of this Narrative, and Account of his Condition, I judge it may be acceptable to the Reader to insert some short Observations communicated to me by an ingenious Gentleman, our Neighbour, who several Times visited him in his Affliction. Take them therefore in his own Words.

‘ When I first saw this young Man, which
 ‘ was quickly after he was brought into *Kings-*
 ‘ *Swinford*, he appeared to me to be of a vigo-
 ‘ rous State of Body, and of an healthy Consti-
 ‘ tution, saving the strange Defect under which
 ‘ he laboured, his Hands and Legs being then
 ‘ deprived of Sense and Motion. I observed
 ‘ them, and handled him: They were from
 ‘ both Wrists and Knees blackish and dying;
 ‘ and I took Notice, that about each Wrist and
 ‘ Knee there was as it were a Circle at the
 ‘ Joint, that divided the sound from the dying
 ‘ Parts, and seemed, like a Ligature, prohi-
 ‘ biting any Nourishment to pass those
 ‘ Bounds; so that the Blood and Spirits benig-
 ‘ wonderfully stopped in their Circulation,
 ‘ it must necessarily follow, that the Parts thus
 ‘ deprived of their wonted Supply, must wither
 ‘ and die as a Leaf in Autumn; which sad Pro-
 ‘ gress they made till both Hands and Legs,
 ‘ from

' from the Wrists and Knees became dead and
 ' dried, black and hard, like Mummy, before
 ' they fell off at the Joints, which they after-
 ' ward did. I also observed, that at first, above
 ' each of the forementioned Circles, there broke
 ' out a Sore, at which the nourishing Juice,
 ' designed by Nature to have fed those Parts,
 ' emptied itself (now in those Sores corrupted)
 ' in a *Quitture* or *Sanies*, so horribly stinking,
 ' that few of his Visitants could well endure the
 ' Room without some strong smelling Defensa-
 ' tive. But visiting him after those dead Limbs
 ' were fallen from the Body (all but one Hand
 ' which was almost severed) I saw the Joints
 ' with the Flesh look well and healthy. They
 ' seemed to me free and untouch'd by the
 ' former Mortification, being quick and sensible,
 ' that now the Fellow complained upon the
 ' least Touch thereof, yet seeming to promise
 ' an easy Cure; for that ichorous stinking Hu-
 ' mour was gone, the Flesh was raw, but
 ' sweet, and here and there besmeared with a
 ' thick corrupt *Pus*, an encouraging Sign, say
 ' Artists, that Sores incline to healing: But this
 ' poor Creature, wanting all Help from Art or
 ' Medicine, save what the Application of the
 ' Leaves of Mullein afforded, which by his
 ' Keeper were used to defend the raw Parts; in
 ' some Weeks there issued the like thin and
 ' stinking Humour as before, which soon put a
 ' Period to his Life'. *So far my Friend.*

As to the young Man himself, he was, as he
 told me a few Days before he died, about twen-
 ty-two Years of Age. It was easy to observe
 he had been a strong young Man, naturally of
 a stub-

a stubborn Temper, much hardened by evil Courses; yet he seemed sometimes to be affected with his Condition, the Discourses made to him, and Prayers with him; and I wish I might have had from him as clear an Evidence of a comfortable Change wrought in him, as I would gladly have told the World. I must in Charity leave his final Condition to God, who thus afflicted and chastised him for the Space of about *four Months*, that he might be a signal Spectacle to Thousands, of God's Displeasure against Impiety.

The Sum of all is this, That a strong, lusty, young Man, as most in the Country where he was born, being unfaithful to God and his Master, and giving himself to Licentiousness and Wickedness, was brought to a Morsel of Bread; and by doing Evil, and denying it with Execrations, had a Sting and secret Remorse in his Conscience, by which, and Want (the Fruit of his Idleness and Intemperance) he grew faint and weak, and his Hands waxed feeble; not being able to work, designed to betake himself to his Friends, but was stopped by the Way, forced to lie down under the Hand of God, that the *Curse* wherewith he had cursed himself might *come upon him*; and so by the stupendious Providence of God he was made a Spectacle to the World of Divine Severity many Weeks, that others might *see, and hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly*. And I wish God may have no Reason to say to any, as by the Apostle in another Case, — *Behold, ye Despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a Work in your Days, which you shall in nowise believe, though a Man declare it unto you.*

C

S I R,

S I R,

Being requested by Mr. Illingworth to give you an Account of what I am able to say concerning John Duncalf, I apprehend the best Way is by a bare and brief Narrative of that Discourse that passed between us whilst I was with him; if there is any Thing worth your Cognizance, you may make use of it as you please.

Our Discourse was as followeth.

May 1, 1677.

Quest. Speaking to him of the Deplorableness of his Condition, and that sure there was a more than ordinary Hand of God's Providence in it, arising from some evil Act, or Actions of his.

Ans. He answered yes, it was for his Sins.

Quest. When I told him that Sin was generally the procuring Cause of every Man's Sufferings; but under such remarkable and dreadful Sufferings as these were, there is usually one or more special Sins to be enquired after, as the nearest procuring Cause, or Causes.

Ans. He answered yes; so it was in his Case. He stole a Bible from a Woman, and being charged

charged with it, denied it, with this fearful Wish, *that his Hands might rot off if he stole it.*

Quest. *Then I asked him, whether his Hands began to blacken, or change Colour, or tingle, &c. presently after the Imprecation, or that fearful Wish of his?*

Ans. Answer'd no; but his Conscience tingled sadly.

Quest. *John, how long was it e'er your Hands began to rot, or had any Signs of Putrefaction upon them after the Curse?*

Ans. About a Fortnight.

Quest. *Have you made your Peace with God for so great an Offence?*

Ans. [Being a Man not apt to speak, and ignorant withal] he made little Answer, only shook his Head.

Quest. *Have you asked the Woman Forgiveness, and to your Power endeavoured to make Satisfaction; or if the Bible were in your Hands, to make Restitution?*

Ans. Yes, he did send for her, and she came accordingly, and prayed God to forgive him, for she did.

Quest. *John, canst pray? I have not found in thee any Motions or Inclinations thereunto since I came.*

Shakes his Head again, and said nothing.

Quest. *John, dost thou know how, at so great a Distance as Sin hath made thee, to go to the Father?*

Ans. Yes, by Jesus Christ, whispering it softly, yet so as I might hear him.

Quest. *Then fearing he did not understand what Christ hath done for the World, I very brief-*

ly opened to him the Tenor and Conditions of the Covenant of Grace, and so how he must expect Mercy at the Hands of God.

Ans. Then (so far as I could guess) he began somewhat to relent; for the Tears trickled down his Cheeks, and many Symptoms of Conviction and Sorrow seemed to be upon him; saying these Words, or to this Purpose: For God's Sake, Sir, pray for me.

Quest. John, I am glad to see some, though the least Tokens of Penitence in thee.—The Lord enlarge thine Heart, and make thy Conscience tender.—I am willing, John, to pray for thee, and so I perceive is this whole Company: But it would be great Satisfaction to us, if you would acquaint us, what we should more particularly desire of God on your Account.

Ans. Good Sir, that my Sins may be pardoned, as Loss of Time, Neglect of Duty, and the Service of God.

Quest. Is not Sabbath-breaking one?

Ans. O yes, yes!

Quest. Have you any thing else to say?

Ans. No. Then let us pray.—

Ending with the Lord's Prayer, he repeated the Petitions after me, saying *Amen*, with somewhat an elevated Voice; being observed to weep several Times whilst we continued Prayer.

After which I parted with him, he making me to promise him the Continuation of my Prayers.

About a Fortnight after he sends a Messenger to me to tell me he desired my Company again; at which Time I made it my Business
not

not so much to ask him Questions, as to inform him of those Truths that I thought had a necessary Tendency to our eternal Peace. (Spending some Hours with him that Day, as I could bear the noisome Stench that then came from him.) Before I came away that Time, which was the last Time that I saw him, his Keeper told me, that a Popish Priest had been with him some few Days before, earnestly endeavouring to proselyte him to their Religion, using this Argument, That if he would turn *Roman Catholick*, I will pawn my Soul to thy Soul thou shalt be saved. But all he could obtain of the poor Man, was only this, that he would consider of it. Then asking *John Duncalf*, whether this was true? He answered, Yes. Praying with him, I took my final Leave and Farewell. This is all, worthy Sir, that I know concerning him. I can only add, that I am

Your most humble Servant,

Kinsars, Aug.
17, 1677.

JONATH. NEWBY.



WE whose Names are hereunto subscribed, living in the Neighbourhood of *Kings-Swinford*, where *John Duncalf*, the Subject of the preceding *Narrative*, whilst God's Hand was so severely upon him, for the most Part resided; and having most of us visited him, and discoursed him in that Condition, and the rest of us received frequent Informations of the Passages herein mentioned from a Multitude of credible Witnesses; do, in order to the rendering so useful a *Relation* more credible (so far as we are known) attest, that we judge it to be very exactly and impartially penned in all the Particulars; and especially in those Passages of it which contain the frequent *serious Acknowledgments* of the mentioned *John Duncalf*, (*That he did imprecate that Judgment upon himself which is here expressed, and upon the Occasion here related*) which he made not only in the Hearing of the Author, but also
of

of most of us; as also, in the Substance of those that relate to the *rotting off* of his Hands and Legs before his Death, in the Manner herein mentioned. And this *Attestation* we make with no other Design, but that God may have the Glory, and the World the Benefit of so *exemplary a Providence*. For which End we as heartily accompany this *Narrative* with our Prayers, as with our Hands.

Simon Ford, D. D.

Tho. Wilsby.

Amb. Sparry.

John Raynolds.

Samuel Mountfort.

Edward Paget.



To his Honoured Friends,

THOMAS TOLEY

OF

KEDERMISTER,

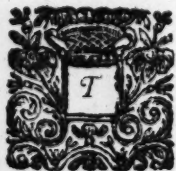
AND

PHILIP TOLEY

OF

PRESTWOOD-HALL, *Esquires.*

Honoured Sirs,



HAT I join both your Names in one Dedication, is not barely because you are Brethren, both in Nature, and endeared Affection to each other; but also, because you have been, and still are so, in the particular Kindnesses you have for me and my Labours: For I gratefully acknowledge, that from the free and unexpected Donation of the elder of you, I am fixed in this Sphere wherein I now move; and from the others near Neighbourhood I receive constant Expressions of a more than ordinary Value for my Ministry. And withal, knowing the great Influence both your Names have on those

those Parts, to the Benefit of which especially the following Papers are designed; I thought it necessary in the Publication of them to desire your joint Countenance in the Recommendation of them to your many Tenants and Dependants. A Request, which I doubt not to obtain from you, because I know both your Hearts are already possessed with a just Veneration of that great Providence which occasioned them, and an hearty Desire that all those who any Way relate to you may be bettered thereby.

Which Providence, as it filled all these Parts, and thence the whole Nation, for some Months, with Discourse and Wonder; and exercised the Curiosity of all inquisitive Persons, whose Occasions brought them near the Place where it was acted; and I hope contributed towards the Edification of many of them: So the Consideration thereof excited me to attempt to render it more serviceable to that great End. This I endeavoured lately, by preaching several Sermons relating to that Occasion to my own Congregation, who had generally been led either by their Curiosity, or better Motives, as it is to be hoped of divers of them, to the Sight of that sad Spectacle, exposed by the Divine Majesty to publick View so near their own Habitations; and afterwards upon the declared Opinion of divers Judicious Auditors, that they might be more publicly useful, reviewed them, and fitted them, as well as such plain Country Discourses could be, without wholly altering the Frame of them, for the Press.

And this I did the rather, because they were thought fit by the Reverend Author of the prefixed Narrative in particular, to accompany it into the World; which he therefore sent to me, that I might so prefix it; and withal, might farther assist it to the obtaining its honest End, by my Attestation and Recommendation.

And the former of these, though he needs it not, I do hereby readily give him, as being assured by unquestionable Testimony, though I myself was out of the Country during the greatest Part of the Time wherein that sad
Provi-

Providence was acting, that the Substance of what he relates is exactly true, and concerning the Particulars, seeing they are averred upon his own personal Knowledge, who by Occasion of the Nearness of his Residence, being within the Bounds of the same Parish, was the most frequent Visitor of the Party, whose Condition he relates, no Man can rationally doubt, who knows him, (as you both have for many Years) or will but ask a Character of him from you.

The latter, because I need not give it as to you, to whom the Knowledge of the Author himself sufficiently recommends it; and yet I desire to give it to others by you, and beg the same again myself from you on the Behalf of the Discourse prefixed, which, as being more properly mine own, I hereby consign with myself to your Service, as being,

Honoured Sirs,

Your most affectionate

And obliged Servant, in the

Work of the Lord Jesus,

Old Swinford,
Sept. 20, 1677.

SIMON FORD.

T.



To the Christian Readers of this Discourse, and the annexed Narrative, especially the Inhabitants of *Old Swinford*, and *King's-Swinford*, with the Town of *Sturbridge*, and the the adjacent Parishes and Hamlets.

Christian Readers, and especially you of this Neighbourhood.

I Suppose many (if not most) of you are already acquainted with the Providence which occasioned these Papers I now present you with ; or, if any be Strangers thereto, they may be informed thereof from the Narrative annexed. The Reverend Author whereof, sufficiently known to divers of you both for his Ability and Integrity, hath thought fit to honour me so far, as to recommend the Publication of it to me, together with this Discourse, the Substance whereof, on the same Occasion, was lately preached in the Hearing of a considerable Number of you.

That I direct them to you especially of this Neighbourhood, will be a sufficient Testimony to After-times, that the Matter of Fact to which they relate, is an undoubted Truth, seeing it dares in this Manner to appear so open-faced before the whole Country where the Scene of it lay ; and also a convictive Testimony against all those of you, if any such there shall be, who after so loud a Call to Repentance and Amendment of Life, shall continue in the Practice of those Sins for which the deceased young Man, once your Neighbour, acknowledged to so many of his Visitants, that the Divine
Ma-

Majesty made him a Spectacle to so many Hundreds, I might say Thousands, for so many Months together.

Wherefore my earnest Request to you is, that you will often recall to your Memories that sad Stroke, which whilst it was fresh News, so affected all the Spectators, and Auditors thereof, that you may not lose the good Impressions then wrought in any of you. And to help you therein, when you find them wearing off, let this Book be your Monitor to renew and govern them, which was the End why it was published and directed to you especially, by your Servant in the Gospel,

S. F.

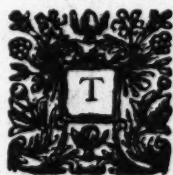


PSAL.



PSAL. ix. 16. the former Part.

*The Lord is known by the Judgment
which he executeth.*



THE *Discourse* that I shall make to you upon this *Text*, (as I suppose you will easily guess, if I should not tell you) is occasioned by as *remarkable an Instance* of God's *just Providence*, (which most of you know to have lately fallen out in our Neighbourhood, and that so notoriously, as to fill all Men's Tongues and Ears with the *Discourse* of it, and the Eyes of many Hundreds, if not Thousands, of them with the beholding it) as it may be, in all the Circumstances, is *hardly to be parallell'd in any History*.

And that which induced me to make such a *Discourse* on this Occasion, was, *partly*, because I thought it needful (at this convenient Distance of Time, wherein the common Talk concerning it as News is almost spent) to recall it again to your Thoughts in a more serious and edifying Way; lest it should die, as to its best Use among you, as *nine Days Wonders*, according to the Proverb, are wont to do: And *partly*, that seeing the Apprehensions of Men have been so different, and their *Discourses* so various about it, most Men judging of it according to their particular Tempers and Humours, in Compliance with the Principles they are governed by, I might, so far as such Works of God, the main Springs whereof are concealed in his own Breast, may be under

understood by us, help you in some competent Measure so to understand it, as to turn it to your greatest Benefit and Advantage: And, *lastly*, that having now gained the Sight of a just and impartial *Narrative* of that sad Story from a *Reverend Person* of great Integrity, and a diligent Enquirer into all the Circumstances thereof, to most of which he was an Eye and Ear-witness, I might dispose you to receive it when it comes to *publick View* with more Readiness, and give it the *better Entertainment*, being instructed before how to make Use of it.

And the *Text* I have chosen for this Purpose, is Part of a *Verse* made remarkable by *two unusual Words* in the close of it; which, though Interpreters agree not in the expounding of them, yet they generally concur in this, that they have something extraordinary in them, [*viz. Higgsaion, Selah.*] For, whatever the *latter* may mean, or whether it be a bare *Note* in *Musick*, which is an undetermined Dispute; the former of them, by the Signification of the *Root* whence it is derived, evidently recommends to us a Matter of *serious Meditation*.

And such indeed the *Verse* is, being a solemn and weighty *Attestation* of the Holy *Psalmist* to the *Divine Providence*, upon Occasion of some remarkable Appearance of it, on the Behalf of his Church against some of their Heathen Enemies; which is the Subject of the preceding Part of the *Psalms*; the Account whereof he seals up with this *epiphonematal Instruction* to all the World, [*The Lord is known by the Judgment which he executeth*] and especially, by this oftentimes most remarkable Circumstance accompanying it, that he makes Offenders themselves the Executioners thereof upon themselves, and *ensnares them in the Work of their own Hands*.

From the *former Part* of which *Divine Testimonial*, (as I may properly call it) I intend, on this Occasion, to handle this *plain Observation*.

That

That God's publick signal Judgments upon any Offender or Offenders, are evident Testimonies by which he is known to Mankind.

In the handling of which *Observation*, I shall endeavour these *seven Things* :

1. To shew you what I mean by these *publick signal Judgments of God upon Offenders*.

2. To evince, by such Evidence as I hope will be satisfactory to all rational Men, that *there are some such penal Strokes* inflicted by God on Offenders in this Life, as deserve the Name of *Signal, Divine Judgments*; and that such Events are not (as *Atheists* pretend) the meer Products of *Chance or Casualty*.

3. To prove, that *God is* (or ought to be) *known by such Judgments as these*.

4. To explain *what of God it is*, which may be, and usually is made *known* by them.

5. To give you the proper *Characters*, by which such *Divine Judgments* are differenced from like *Providences* befalling Men on other Accounts.

6. To direct you in the *Application* of such *Judgments* to particular Persons and Cases, so as that you may not offend against *Justice or Charity*.

7. And, lastly, to close up this whole Discourse with some *useful, practical Inferences*.

I. *First*, To shew you, [*What I mean by these publick Signal Judgments of God on Offenders*.] And here you are first to understand, that *God's Judgments* in the Notion of the Holy Scriptures are of *two Sorts*; to wit, his *Judicia Judicantia*, and *Judicata*.

1. His *Judicia Judicantia*; or, *Judgments pronounced* in the Sentence of his *Law*, dooming Offenders to such Penalties for their Offences against it. And it is usual with the Scripture to call the *Laws* of God, on this Account, *his Judgments*, and to join them with *Statutes*, as Words of like Import, as I could shew in very many Places.

2. His *Judicia Judicata*; or, *Judgments* (in the Phrase of the Text) *executed*, which are the former
Dooms

Dooms actually inflicted, and are therefore called by the Name of those, according to which they do befall Men. Now, though it be true, that no *Evil of suffering* befalls any Sinner, but what, to speak properly, is such a *Judgment* of God, because all Evils penal are before denounced in God's Law, which every Sinner breaks; yet the Scripture is not wont to call them all by that Name; for that is usually applied to those penal Strokes of God, which have some special Characters of his *vindictive Justice* upon them; to wit, something in the *Nature* of them, that is not *ἀνθρώπινον*, common to Men, or in the *Circumstances*, something of surprizing Suddenness from the Unexpectedness or Unlikelihood of their befalling Men, in respect of the Time, Place, Condition, Imployment, Company, &c. or something unusual in the *Instruments*, by which, or *Manner* in which, they are inflicted, &c. and especially if there be any Thing in them that appears to be either *above*, or *contrary* to, or but *besides* the wonted Course of *Nature*, and so is either *miraculous* or *prodigious*.

Now these two are either inflicted on Sinners in a *private* Way, so as few or none know of them, but such as feel them, and those who are intimately conversant with them; or else they are laid on them in a *publick notorious Manner*, (as the Judgments amongst us pronounced upon great Offenders are wont to be executed) so as to call in and invite Spectators to behold them. And such *Judgments* as these last the Text must be meant of; and of such I desire to be understood in what follows in this Argument.

And this shall suffice for my *first* Undertaking.

II. The *second* deserves to have more Time spent on it, because it contains the *main Foundation* of the whole following Discourse. For, if there be *no such Judgments executed* by God at all, but *Time and Chance*, (in this Case as well as others) not only *happen to all*, but *govern all* too; then there can be *no Knowledge of God* drawn from them. Yea, if there be no such
Thing

1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37
 38
 39
 40
 41
 42
 43
 44
 45
 46
 47
 48
 49
 50
 51
 52
 53
 54
 55
 56
 57
 58
 59
 60
 61
 62
 63
 64
 65
 66
 67
 68
 69
 70
 71
 72
 73
 74
 75
 76
 77
 78
 79
 80
 81
 82
 83
 84
 85
 86
 87
 88
 89
 90
 91
 92
 93
 94
 95
 96
 97
 98
 99
 100
 101
 102
 103
 104
 105
 106
 107
 108
 109
 110
 111
 112
 113
 114
 115
 116
 117
 118
 119
 120
 121
 122
 123
 124
 125
 126
 127
 128
 129
 130
 131
 132
 133
 134
 135
 136
 137
 138
 139
 140
 141
 142
 143
 144
 145
 146
 147
 148
 149
 150
 151
 152
 153
 154
 155
 156
 157
 158
 159
 160
 161
 162
 163
 164
 165
 166
 167
 168
 169
 170
 171
 172
 173
 174
 175
 176
 177
 178
 179
 180
 181
 182
 183
 184
 185
 186
 187
 188
 189
 190
 191
 192
 193
 194
 195
 196
 197
 198
 199
 200
 201
 202
 203
 204
 205
 206
 207
 208
 209
 210
 211
 212
 213
 214
 215
 216
 217
 218
 219
 220
 221
 222
 223
 224
 225
 226
 227
 228
 229
 230
 231
 232
 233
 234
 235
 236
 237
 238
 239
 240
 241
 242
 243
 244
 245
 246
 247
 248
 249
 250
 251
 252
 253
 254
 255
 256
 257
 258
 259
 260
 261
 262
 263
 264
 265
 266
 267
 268
 269
 270
 271
 272
 273
 274
 275
 276
 277
 278
 279
 280
 281
 282
 283
 284
 285
 286
 287
 288
 289
 290
 291
 292
 293
 294
 295
 296
 297
 298
 299
 300
 301
 302
 303
 304
 305
 306
 307
 308
 309
 310
 311
 312
 313
 314
 315
 316
 317
 318
 319
 320
 321
 322
 323
 324
 325
 326
 327
 328
 329
 330
 331
 332
 333
 334
 335
 336
 337
 338
 339
 340
 341
 342
 343
 344
 345
 346
 347
 348
 349
 350
 351
 352
 353
 354
 355
 356
 357
 358
 359
 360
 361
 362
 363
 364
 365
 366
 367
 368
 369
 370
 371
 372
 373
 374
 375
 376
 377
 378
 379
 380
 381
 382
 383
 384
 385
 386
 387
 388
 389
 390
 391
 392
 393
 394
 395
 396
 397
 398
 399
 400
 401
 402
 403
 404
 405
 406
 407
 408
 409
 410
 411
 412
 413
 414
 415
 416
 417
 418
 419
 420
 421
 422
 423
 424
 425
 426
 427
 428
 429
 430
 431
 432
 433
 434
 435
 436
 437
 438
 439
 440
 441
 442
 443
 444
 445
 446
 447
 448
 449
 450
 451
 452
 453
 454
 455
 456
 457
 458
 459
 460
 461
 462
 463
 464
 465
 466
 467
 468
 469
 470
 471
 472
 473
 474
 475
 476
 477
 478
 479
 480
 481
 482
 483
 484
 485
 486
 487
 488
 489
 490
 491
 492
 493
 494
 495
 496
 497
 498
 499
 500
 501
 502
 503
 504
 505
 506
 507
 508
 509
 510
 511
 512
 513
 514
 515
 516
 517
 518
 519
 520
 521
 522
 523
 524
 525

Things as *Divine Judgments*; then the very God they are supposed to attest to, which is that the *Atheist* would have may, for all their Testimony, *not be*. Whereas, if we evince by Reason, that *any*, though never so few, of those Events, cannot be produced but by a Divine Providence, we do both prove the *Being* of such a Providence, and withal vindicate Religion from the Imputation of being superstitious, in attributing *all others* of like Nature to the *same Cause*.

And therefore on *this Head*, I take myself to be obliged to make good these *two Things*.

1. *That there are some penal Events which can by no rational Person be justly attributed to meer Chance or Casualty, or any like Cause, not capable of Choice or Design, in its Actings.*

2. *That such penal Events as these, must therefore be the Effects of a Providence, and that Providence Divine.*

I. The *first* of these Propositions I prove by the following Arguments:

1. There are some *penal Events* befalling Men in this World, which have been punctually *threatned* and *foretold*, as they have in the Issue fallen out; and many of them so threatned and foretold in the very *Circumstances* with which they were accompanied in the Event. As for Instance,

(1.) In reference to the *Generality of Mankind*; so in the *first Threatnings* annexed to the Law given to our *first Parents* in Paradise, the daily Experience of all human Nature, taken Notice of by the *Heathens* themselves, shews it to have been punctually fulfilled, in the *Corruption* and *Calamities* generally befalling the whole Race of Men. And that other, in the Law given to *Noah*, that *whosoever sheds Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed*; is continually in the almost miraculous Discoveries of *Murders*, and bringing Murderers to condign Punishment, verified in the Observation of the *Generality of Mankind* to this very Day. As also is that, of the wonderful Ways

by which *Conspiracies* against *Sovereign Princes* are brought to Light, according to the notable Threatning to that Purpose, *Eccles. x. 20.*

(2.) And in reference to *particular Persons* and *Nations*. So in the Exclusion of *Moses* and *Aaron* from *Canaan*, it is taken notice of expressly in the Account given of their Deaths, (of *Aaron's*, by *Moses*, his own Brother, and of *Moses's* own, by him that fills up the Story after his Decease) that it fell out to both of them according to what God had denounced. And it were easy to add many more of the same Kind to particular Persons; but that of the *old Prophet* to the *disobedient Prophet* at *Bethel*, that of *Elisha* to the *incredulous Lord* in *Samaria*, those of *Elijah* and *Micaiah* to *Abab* and *Jezebel*, shall suffice, instead of all the rest, whereof the historical Part of Scripture is full, because they are so notoriously evident to all that know the *Bible*.

And as to *Nations*. To omit the long Catalogue of all the *Plagues of Egypt*, threatened and inflicted in the *Circumstances* mentioned in the Relation of them; that one great Instance of the often foretold *Captivity* of the whole *Jewish Nation* is so observable, and so attested beyond all Exception by the *publick Records* of that Nation, held to this Day by all their Posterity in Veneration, that there is no more, nay, not so much Cause to doubt it, than there is that *England* was conquered by *William the Norman*.

I shall close this Argument with *two Instances*, so punctual in a Circumstance of all others most unlikely to be lighted on by Chance, that I know not what can be objected against them to invalidate the Force of them, but an Exception against the *Records* themselves, whence they are taken: To which I shall therefore add a Word or two anon.

The *one* is, that of the Judgment denounced against *Jeroboam's Altar*, and the Priests that offered on it, to be executed, as it was, by *Josiah*, mentioned by
his

his very Name, about 300 Years before that Performance.

The *other*, is that of the Destruction of *Babylon* (in order to the Restitution of the *Jewish* Nation ;) wherein *Cyrus* is also, by his very Name, foretold to be the Person that, as he did, was to effect it. Which Prophecy, by the learned *Grotius*'s Computation, was uttered 170 Years, and by that of *Junius*, and others, above 200, before he accomplished it, or probably was in Being. And the very *Manner* how he was to take that great Imperial City, to wit, by the turning away, and drying up *Euphrates*, is so lively described by the Prophet *Jeremy*, that the Heathen Authors, *Herodotus*, and others, who give us an Account of the Event, justify the Verification of the Prediction the same Way.

Now, in these and the like *Predictions* of future Events, with such Circumstances, there is no Man but must allow a greater *Certainty*, with respect to the *Causes* on which they depend, than there can be in any Products of *meer Casualty*. Which is my *first Argument*.

2. The *second* is this. There are *Instances* of some *penal Events* that have been brought upon Offenders in a Way of *formal Proceeding* ; yea, such as is usual even in *human Judicatures*. For Instance: When *Josbua* had forbidden the embezzling any Part of the Spoil of *Jericho* under the Penalty of a *divine Curse*, *Achan*, the Offender, falls under the Danger of it: Upon the Discomfiture of the Host before *Ai*, Enquiry is made after the unknown Transgressor of that Law. Then he is found out by the Direction of a *four-fold Lot*, that brought all the People, down to his very Family, under a Scrutiny, till the Lot takes him. Then follows his Examination, Confession, Judgment, and Execution. And not much unlike was the *Process* by which *Jonah* was cast into the Sea, and there imprisoned in the *Belly* of a *Whale*, till his Repentance procured his Release. Now, abating the

extraordinary Way of Discovery in these two Cases, the rest of the *Procedure* in these Judgments is formed *methodically*, according to the Order of human Justice. And must these Proceedings (in so exact a *Method* too) be attributed to meer *Casualty*? May not the Persons who have the Confidence to assert this, as well affirm that Malefactors are *hanged* at *Tyburn* by meer *Casualty*, when they have been seized by Order of Law, committed to *Newgate* by Warrant, tried at the *Sessions-house*, and having received their Sentence upon the Verdict of a Jury, been conducted to the Place of Execution, and there turned off the Cart, by the known Officers thereunto by Law appointed?

3. My *third Argument* is this: In the actual punishing of Offenders, many Times the *Instruments* made use of have been *irrational Creatures*; and yet have, by an *unknown Influence*, been directed to act, as if they were governed by Principles of *Justice*, as well as *Reason*; as putting an evident *Discrimination* and *Difference* betwixt them and the Innocent, when both of them have equally been within their Power. In the famous Case of the Plagues of *Egypt*, how came the *Frogs*, the *Flies*, the *Hail*, and the *Plague*, &c. to seize only the Houses, Cattle, Bodies of *Egyptians*, and not touch an *Israelite*, or any of his Concerns, when (as it appears by the Order for the *sprinkling of the Jews Houses* with the *Blood of the Paschal Lamb* for Distinction) they lived, for the most Part, and conversed intermixedly each with other? How was it that the *Waters* of the *Red-Sea* stood as a *Wall* on both Sides, whilst the *Israelites* were marching through it; and returned to their Course, so soon as they came on dry Land, to overwhelm *Pharaoh* and his Host, who were in Pursuit of them? When the *three glorious Confessors* were adjudged to the *fiery Furnace* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, whence came it that the *Fire* (so ragingly hot as it was) abstained from touching so much as one *Hair of their Heads*, or *singing* their *Garments*, and to burn only their *Bonds* asunder, and set them at Liberty to walk in it, who were cast
in

in bound; and yet to lick up and devour, even without the Mouth of the Furnace, those who cast them in? And when Daniel himself was cast into the Lions Den, and lodged among them in the Bottom of the Den one whole Night, whence was it, that the hungry and cruel Beasts did not the least Hurt to him; and yet the very same Lions, when his Accusers and their Relations were cast in thither, had the Mastery of them, and brake all their Bones in Pieces, before they came to the Bottom of the Den? Lastly, (to name no more Examples of this Nature) when the Lion, according to the Prediction of the old Prophet at Bethel, slew the Man of God, that, against God's Commandment, had eaten and drank there; was he directed by meer Chance so to do? Did he, being hungry, and seeking for Prey, light on him casually only? If so, why, (according to the usual Wont of such Beasts of Prey, as they observe who have been in those Countries, to forbear falling on Men, but when they can light on no other Food) did he not seize on his Ass rather; but kill him, and not touch his Ass, that, as unconcerned in the Danger, was afterwards found standing by his Side? Why did he only kill him, and not devour him, and then withdraw to his Den; but rather chuse to stand by him, as resolved to avouch the Fact: And, that all the while the News was carrying to the City, and came by Report to the old Prophet, and his Horse saddling, and he and his Company travelling to the Place of that sad Spectacle? And when they came, why did he suffer them to carry away his Prey so tamely as it seems he did? Do these Things look like meer Casualties? Is it not rather evident, that such Agents, acting so differently from their own Nature and Inclination, so as to punish only the Guilty, and single them out among others equally within their Reach, were directed by an intelligent Cause, by whose Order and Commission they made this Difference? And this is our second Proposition to be proved upon this Head; [That seeing these Things cannot fall out by meer Chance, or any thing else of like Nature,

Nature, they must be governed by Divine Providence] which I make good by these *Steps of rational Argumentation*. Such Events as fall not out by *Chance*, fall out according to *Choice*, or *Contrivance*. That *Choice* and *Contrivance*, in Matter of Punishment, must either be the *Choice* and *Contrivance* of the *Sufferer* or *Inflicter*. *Sufferers* are not wont to chuse and contrive their own Harms, but rather to avoid, and use what Means they can to guard themselves from them. If the *Inflicter* then chuse and contrive the Punishments mentioned; then, as the *Contrivance* argues him to be a *rational Being*; so the bringing his *Contrivances* to pass by such Instruments as have been mentioned, and with such Certainty, argues him to be such a *Being*, as hath a *predominant Power* over *Nature* itself; which can be no other than *divine*; and these Effects mentioned, and the like, can be no other than the Products of his *infinite Power* and *Wisdom*, as you will see more anon.

Against the *Force* of these *Arguments*, I cannot imagine how the *Atheist* can guard his Principles, but by excepting against the *Evidence* of the *Matter of Fact* in the Instances before-mentioned: Seeing there is no clear Proof of them, in most of the Cases, but from the holy Scriptures; which, though we own and reverence, yet he looks on with Contempt and Scorn, as not owning the *Authority* we allow them.

But he ought to consider, that it is not in this whole Process of Argumentation in *Question* before us, *whether these Writings be divinely inspired or no?* There is, herein, no other Esteem required to be given them by him, but only what is due to *credible Histories*. And it is enough for our present Purpose, if they can justify themselves to be *true Records* of those Matters which fell out in those Ages which they undertake to account for; and so much I can hardly imagine how any Man can have the Forehead to deny, considering that they have all those *Motives of Credibility* for them, (with the Advantage of *indisputable Anti-*

Antiquity, and the having been *owned* by so great a Part of the *World*, for so many *Ages*) which no *other Histories* whatsoever can pretend to. Whence it must appear to all unbiaſſed Judges, that he that will allow upon the Motives mentioned, *Plutarch*, and *Thucydides*, and *Livy*, and *Tacitus*, and other ſuch *Historians*, to be competent Witneſſes of the Matters of Fact related by them, muſt needs be governed by Prejudice rather than Reason, if he deny the ſame to *Moses* and other *Jewiſh* *Historians*, concerning the Matters falling out among them, who are, and have been always in greater Eſteem in their own Nation, (who beſt knew their own Story) than thoſe mentioned ever were either in *Greece* or *Rome*.

But if yet (notwithſtanding all that hath been ſaid to the contrary) the *Atheiſt* will ſtill perſiſt in denying the *Matters of Fact*, upon which the former Arguments are bottomed, becauſe they are (for the greateſt Part) only recorded in *that Book*, which it is the Interest of his Irreligion to diſbelieve, what will he ſay to *two Inſtances*, which I have purpoſely reſerved to this Place, becauſe they are ſo great as to prove themſelves to be the Effects of a Divine Providence; and becauſe they are confirmed by ſeveral *Heathen* Authors too, as well as related in the Holy Scripture; I mean the *universal Deluge*, and the Deſtruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*? For if theſe Inſtances *de facto* be true, to which there is ſuch a concurring Evidence, he will find it very Difficult to perſuade himſelf, (that I ſay not others) that ſo *vaſt* a *Quantity of Waters*, as ſo covered all the Face of the Earth, and overflowed the *bigheſt Mountains*, could be collected by any Power leſs than *Divine*, and much leſs come together by Chance; and will be no leſs puzzled to ſhew by what inferior Agent ſuch a *Fire* as burnt thoſe *Cities* could be kindled, and burn with that Vehemence, as to preſerve its Remembrance without Alteration in a *Lake* of ſulphurous Water for ſo many thouſand Years; though that *Lake* continually for ſo long together

gether hath swallowed all the Streams of so great a River as *Jordan* falling into it, which is the constant Wonder of all Travellers to this Day.

And so I discharge my *second* Undertaking, to prove, [*That there are some such Judicial Providences that hath been executed by God.*]

III. I come now to the *Third*, to shew *that God is, or ought to be known by them*, as he that works them upon that Design. And here I shall be but brief, as indeed I need not to be large in a Matter so plain and evident both from Reason and Scripture. For (1.) in *Reason*, what can be the End of Sovereign Providence in such extraordinary Appearances, but to manifest itself and its Author? An End, for which even Men are wont to do those great Things which at any Time they have attained to, in publick Theatres, or other great Concourses of People, as our Saviour's Kindred tell him. (2.) And the *Scripture* also declareth no less in other Places. So when the Royal Psalmist prophetically imprecateth those dreadful Judgments which make up the greatest Part of the 83d. *Psalms*, in the last Verse he assigns the intended Use of them to all the World; to wit, *That Men may know that he alone whose Name is Jehovah, is the most High over all the Earth?* And God himself is elsewhere brought in, upon the Desolations which he had made by his penal Providences in the Heathen World for oppressing his People, as calling on all Men to behold those his Works, and be still, (*i. e.* to cease from farther Hostilities against his Interests) as knowing by Experience already dearly bought, that *he is God*, and will that he is God, and will *be exalted in the Earth*.

In a Word, to add no more Text for Proof of that which almost every Page in the Bible attests unto, the whole Church are, by the Author of the *Apocalyps*, represented upon such notable Judicial Providences, as singing the Song of Moses and the Lamb, *i. e.* a Christian Song, like that of Moses after the drowning of the Egyptians, and therein instructing all the World

World in this Duty; *Who* (say they) *shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name; for all Nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy Judgments are made manifest?* Even as *Moses* and the *Israelites* in the *Song* to which this is parallel, infer from the Judgments of God on *Pharoah* and his Host, *Who is like thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises; (or the Actions whence thou gatherest thy Praise) doing Wonders?* And this opens the Way to my fourth Head.

IV. The Enquiry concerning [*What of God it is, which is known or to be known by these signal Judgments?*]

And to this Enquiry I answer two Things.

1. His Being and Existence. *That there is a God.* For he that executeth Judgments so, as no finite limited Being, no created Power can, must needs be a *Supreme uncreated Being*; that is *God*. And this is an Argument so strongly conclusive against the *Atheist*, that he is forced to secure his Principles, to fly to that sorry *Refuge of Lies*, which I have before refuted; to buoy up his Reputation among those who know not the Difference betwixt Reason and Noise, and judge no Disputant baffled, that hath any thing to say, though what he says be next to nothing. For, as he that is a meer *Stranger* in *England*, if yet he see *Courts of Judicature*, constantly kept in the *King's Name*, and *Criminals* continually punished by a Power deputed and commissioned by him, cannot rationally doubt whether there be a *King in England*; so neither can any Man, with any Colour of Reason, seeing God's Judicial Providences continually executing his known Laws, make it a Question, whether there be a *God that judgeth the Earth*. Thus is *Jehovah* known by his Judgments, to be *Jehovah*.

2. His eminent Divine Perfections and Glorious Attributes are illustriously manifested by his Judgments executed. As for Instance,

(1.)

(1.) His *Justice*; which in these remarkable Providences always justifies itself, as ordinarily lighting upon those Offenders, concerning whom not only their own Consciences, as in the Confession of *Pharaoh himself*, crying out [*The Lord is righteous, and I and my People are wicked.*] Exod. ix. 27. but also the whole World are, or may be, abundantly satisfied they have deserved it; yea, and among them, even they who not only *commit those Crimes* which they see punished in others, but promote them, by *shewing the Pleasure they take in those that do them*, yet know that they who do such Things are worthy of Death; and approve the Judgment of God, even in those Sentences and Executions, wherein they themselves are implicitly condemned.

(2.) His *Mercy and Goodness* in many Particulars. As, 1. when he *saves so many* for every one that he smites, though equally criminal; and is as remarkable in his Patience and Long-sufferings to some, as he is in his Severity to others. 2. In *punishing less than Men's Iniquities deserve*, by how much the greatest temporal Suffering that can be, is less than Hell. 3. In making the *greatest Evils* Men suffer here, Occasions and Means to preserve them from greater Judgments hereafter. 4. And *lastly*, in making his Severities to the *worst* of Men, the Means of signal Preservations, and Deliverances to those that are eminently good; and shewing thereby, that he as well *knows how to deliver the Righteous*, as to *punish the Wicked*.

(3.) His *Omnipotent Power, and Sovereign Greatness*, whilst: (1.) he reaches those Malefactors that are too high for *human Justice*, and pride themselves in their Uncontroulableness by Human Laws. Thus, by his dealing with *Pharaoh*, who would own no Lord but himself, he draws an Acknowledgment from *Jethro*, that *he was greater than all the Gods, because in the Thing wherein the proud Tyrant and his People dealt proudly, he was above them*. And (2.) whilst he summons in the *Posse* of the *whole Creation*, to bring
such

such *over-sized Malefactors* to Execution; and arms the very meanest and most contemptible of them, as *Flies*, and *Lice*, and *Frogs*, with Weapons to subdue and conquer them. And (3.) lastly, whilst he sometimes makes a Kind of *new Creation*, to serve his just Ends, by altering the very Course of Nature; as in the general Deluge, when the very *Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, i. e.* the Waters which were in the Bowels of the Earth, with those of the vast Ocean itself, left their proper Seat naturally appointed for them, and came up to cover the Face of the Earth.

(4.) His *Verity* or *Truth*; often in the Performance of particular Threatnings and Predictions in particular Cases, as those before-mentioned; and always, even in them too in fulfilling the *general Curses*, and Denunciations of his Wrath against the Transgressors of his Laws. So that Men are hereby convinced, that his *Judgments* are not only *righteous*, but *true*.

(5.) His *Omniscience*, or certain Knowledge of all the Words and Actions of Men, though never so much concealed in all imaginable Secrecy, and yet oftentimes by the Process of his Judicial Providences he brings them to Light. For (1.) by them he sometimes draws out of the Bosoms of Offenders, by their own *Confession*, as in the Cases of *Achan*, *Jahab*, and others, those Things which were not otherwise discoverable. And (2.) by strange and unusual Accidents he sets the *inquisitive Humour* of Men on Work, to lay odd and *uncouth Passages* and Circumstances together, till at last they make a sufficient *concurrent Evidence* to convict Malefactors of secret and unknown Crimes; than which there is nothing more usual in ordinary Courts of Justice. So that it comes frequently to pass, as *Zophar* observes, that *the Heavens first reveal Men's Iniquities, and then the Earth riseth up against them*.

(6.) And lastly, not to multiply more Particulars on this Head, his *infinite Wisdom*, and most prudent Counsel,

Counsel, whereby he manageth those penal Providences. so, as to out-wit the wisest of Men, when they imploy all their Policy to secure themselves; by which he shews himself *wonderful in Counsel*, and gives the World daily Oecasion *wisely to consider his Doings*; to find out the admirable Contexture of the Wheels and Springs, by which that great Engine is moved, which *takes the Wise in their own Craftiness, and snares the Wicked*, as the following Part of my Text expresseth it, *in the Work of their own Hands*.

And in may of those great Works, when Ages have studied them all they can, yet still there is something remaining undiscoverable to exercise the Wonder of the most curious Enquirers, and make them cry out with the holy Apostle, *O the Depth! How unsearchable are God's Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* And this shall suffice to be spoken to my fourth Head.

V. The *fifth* follows, to wit, to give you the best Account I can, of [*The distinguishing Characters by which such Divine Judgments are differenced from like Providence befalling Men upon other Accounts.*]

The Reason of which Disquisition is, because God many Times either actively inflicts, or at least passively permits great afflicting *Evils* to befall Men, yea, the *best Men*; which are not to be ranked by us under this Head of *Judicial Executions*, as being intended by God to promote holy Designs of his own of quite a different Nature and Tendency.

Now in the Pursuance of this great Enquiry, I shall first adventure to your Consideration some *general Observations concerning Divine Judgments*, which may conduce to the governing ourselves in it with due Caution; and then give you the *Characters* I promised.

I. The *general Observations* are these.

[I.] That such *publick signal Judgments* as my Text and Doctrine suppose, are a Sort of Divine Providences which God doth more *rarely* than is ordinarily believed,

believed, exhibit to the World. For he himself calls the Execution of Judgment in such publick and notorious Manner, *his strange Work*. And speaking after the Manner of Men, tells us, 'tis that which he *doth not willingly*, i. e. not of his own natural Propension, but upon the Urgency of some special Occasions, which indispensably require it. Wherefore it is, that the obliging Instances of his Mercy and Bounty, his Patience and Long-suffering, and other Expressions of his *Goodness*, his most natural Attribute, are the *daily* and *hourly* Exercise of his Providence; but those other harsh and unwelcome Issues of it, like *unnatural Births*, are produced but now and then. And that (1.) *partly*, because this World is not properly *seculum Mercedis*, the Season for the *Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*, wherein to render to every Man according to his Works; but that Business is reserved for the World to come, and the *Day in which he hath appointed to judge the World by the Man whom he hath ordained*; and he thinks it therefore not fit to lessen the Expectation thereof, by a seeming *Anticipation* of the Employment proper thereunto; and (2.) *partly* because he is desirous to keep up the just *Value* of such great Occurrences by the *Rarity* of them; which, if they were common, would grow unto like Disesteem with other Things that come under daily Observation; and (3.) *partly* because, as a *bountiful Benefactor*, he is not willing to straiten his Liberality to the very worst of Men, but to give them a plentiful Share of the *good Things* of this Life, whose *Portion* is laid out *here*; and *lastly*, because it conduceth to the *Glory* of his *Justice* in another World, to give bad Men, of themselves inclined to grow insolent upon his Forbearance, the Occasion of *hardening their Hearts in Evil*, by not *executing Sentence against every wicked Work speedily*.

[2.] That it is highly probable, that these Sorts of unusual Providences are yet rarer in the *latter Ages* of the World, than in the *earlier*; and under the *Gospel*,
and

and among *Christians*, than under the *Law*, and among the *Jews*; because there was in those Times more Occasion for them, and Use of them, than now there is. Before the *Scripture* in any Part was written, *Tradition*, with the Reliques of the *Light of Nature*, sometimes assisted with *extraordinary Revelation*, was the *Rule* whereby the World was governed. But because the *two former* were much corrupted, and the *third* afforded but now and then to a few eminently good Men, the Generality had need to be often taught their Duty, as Gideon taught the Men of Succoth with *Thorns and Briars*, sharp and severe Providences. And even after so much of it was written, as served to govern the *Jewish Church* under that Administration, God was pleased to keep up still, in great Part, the same Method of administering his Kingdom upon Earth by exemplary Providences; as probably considering, (1.) that what was so written, was to be kept among them to whom it did principally *pertain*; and that the rest of the World was to be left generally in the same Condition they were in before. And (2.) that by the Difference put betwixt the *Jews* and them, by a peculiar *discriminating Religion*, the rest of the World were generally like to be exasperated against them; so that had they not been kept in Awe by such penal Providences now and then, they would continually have been attempting the Extirpation of a Sort of Men so odious; and had not the *Jews* themselves been encouraged in their *singular Religion*, by such frequent miraculous Appearances of God for the Punishment of their Persecutors, they would have been the more tempted to have purchased their Peace with their Neighbours, by waving their Religious Observations to purchase their good Will. And (3.) that this Law to the *Jews* themselves, was for the most Part like a *Book sealed*; in that the greatest Encouragements to Obedience, the great *Promises* of the *Gospel*, were obscured under dark Expressions, and typical Shadows, till the *Vail on Moses's Face* was taken

taken away by Christ, and Life and Immortality by him were brought to Light; and therefore even they had still much Need to be quickened to their Duty by sensible Motives. And (4.) *lastly*, that they were, by the very Constitution and Temper of the Nation, a very *stiff-necked* and unmanageable People; and so not easily to be kept in Obedience by bare *written Rules*, without a *Rod* of severe *Temporal Judgments*, frequently laid on the Backs of some amongst themselves, to keep the rest in Awe.

And if we also consider these Particulars, as God probably did, and some others that might be suggested of the like Nature; we may very well, I think, be satisfied, that if we do *not now bear* of such *frequent notorious Executions* of Divine Justice, as then were the *State* of the *Church* since *Christ*, and that Church spread over all the World; the *Clearness* and *Perspicuity* of his Doctrine in the main Inducements to a good Life; and the more plentiful Effusions of the *Holy Spirit upon all Flesh*, to produce a more filial Obedience thereunto, render it less necessary that we *should do so*; especially, seeing we have all those great Instances of divine Severity which were exhibited in those antient Ages, delivered down even to us, *upon whom the Ends of the World are come*, by holy Pen-men in Writing, *for our Admonition*.

[3.] That the *certain Interpretation* of such rare judicial Providences, when they now-a-days fall out, is to us in these latter Times more *difficult* than it was to the Men of those Days, in which they were more frequent. The Reason whereof is, because God, since the *Scriptures* were compleated, and generally received, hath put a *Stop* to that *Spirit of Prophecy*, which in former Times raised up Prophetic Men, to predict and threaten Judgments before they came, and interpret them infallibly when they came; so that the most perfect Judgment we can now make of them, though we use all the Means left us to that Purpose with the greatest and most conscientious

scientific Exactness, will fall very short of *Infallibility*, and amount, at most, only to a great *moral Certainty*, in most Cases of that Nature.

[4.] That it is therefore very *easy* to *mistake* in this Affair, and be deceived by the making such *Interpretations* of Divine Providences of this Nature as *Fancy* and *Passion*, continually ready herein to interpose, may be apt to suggest to us; and the most of Men, and too many good Men too, are very prone to be misled by them themselves, and to mislead others.

[5.] That such Errors and Mistakes are not more *easy* and *frequent*, (than as they are commonly made Use of) *sinfull* and *dangerous*; because, by our Aptness to avouch them, and in a Sort impose them on the Belief of others, we too often render ourselves guilty of *prophaning God's Name*, of which his great Works are a considerable Part, by stamping our own fond Conceits with his *Image* and *Superscription*; which is no less a Crime in this Case *against God*, than the minting and vending adulterate Coin in worldly Dealings and Payments is to the *temporal Prince* under whom we live.

[6] And yet, *lastly*, notwithstanding all that hath been said to beget a new Caution in us in a Matter of so great an Import, I must avouch, that I do not believe God hath *altogether tyed up his Hands* from executing signal Judgments, even in these Days, or in those Regions where the *Gospel* is preached with greatest Clearness, and most powerful Evidence; especially, in Case the *substantial Corruptions* of so pure a Religion be at any Time so gross, or the general *Debauchery of Men's Lives* under such excellent Instructions be so foul and scandalous to the holy Doctrine of our Saviour, as to call for them; and when any new *Impieties* of the largest Dimensions, and prodigious *Immoralities*, become bold and audacious, beyond the Examples of the former Ages of Christianity, with Impunity, if not Countenance and Encouragement, from those that ought to suppress them, among those that are the noted Professors of it. Nor do I
think

think that we are in such Cases so destitute of Direction, *partly* from parallel Instances of Scripture, and *partly* from the general Notions of Mankind in all Ages concerning such Providences; and *partly* from the concurring Evidence of the Circumstances of them when they so fall out, &c. but that we may even in these Days, by the *ordinary Assistance* of God's *Spirit*, even without a Revelation, discern sufficient Marks and Tokens of divine Judgments upon many of them, to lay a Foundation for the Improvement of them, to the Ends which God generally designs by them, both to ourselves and others. For a *moral Certainty*, in such Matters wherein a Duty is to be inferred from the various Accidents of this Life, hath to us the Force of a *divine Command*. A Principle, which if it be not owned, we must necessarily be endangered to be governed, in most of the ordinary Actions of our present Callings and Employments, by that *wild and extravagant Rule* of *expecting special Scripture Determinations* in all the Particularities of our worldly Conditions, which no sober Man will own as the Measure to govern his Actions by.

2. And such in the *second Place*, as I have described, I hope, will the *Characters* of remarkable divine Judgments be, that follow.

(1.) The *Greatness* and *Publickness* of a divine Stroke, beyond what is *common to Men*; especially, if so great, as in common Repute to be above the Power of Man to inflict, as I have before intimated, gives the first Glimpse of Light in this Case. Which puts us, as it lawfully may, nay, more in Duty ought, where the Concern is some Way of our own, upon Enquiry into the *Nature* of it; for we are wonted to do so in human Societies. If a *Stranger* come by a *Gal'ows* or a *Whipping-post*, and see a Man *hanged*, and *drawn* and *quartered* at the *one*, and another severely *whipped* at the other, he will presently be enquiring, wherefore such Persons are handled with such Severity in so notorious a Manner? And when Severities, it may be far

E greate

greater from God, befall any with as publick Circumstances, it is equally rational for the *Spectators*, and much more the *Sufferers*, to enquire what he means by them; and even to suspect the worst, that they may be *Judicial Executions*, till he be informed otherwise. Yea, God himself intimates his Approbation of Men's Inquisitiveness in such Cases, when he tells the *Jews*, that he would inflict such sore Plagues on them, as should move all Nations to ask, *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this Land? What meaneth the Heat of this great Anger?*

(2.) But this alone, is not a *sufficient Character* to warrant us to pronounce such a Stroke to be a *Divine Judgment*, how severe soever it be; except there appear as evident and notorious a *Crime* in Conjunction with it. For the judging by the *former Mark* singly, misled *Job's* Friends in his Case; and the Men of *Melita*, in the Censure they passed upon *St. Paul*, when they saw the *Viper hanging on his Hand*. And it may mislead us in like Cases; for if we interpret all such great and remarkable Severities, on whomsoever they fall, to be *Divine Judgments*, we shall be often endangered unjustly to *condemn the Generation of God's best Children*. But where *both* these in the same Persons meet, with equal Evidence, we can hardly be mistaken, except all Mankind be supposed to be so too, who commonly argue in such Cases from this Character, in calling such Providences *Judgments of God*; or, if we be mistaken, It is in a Sort a safe Error; as that which, if we make a religious Use of our Apprehensions about it, will mislead us only into such Affections and Actions as tend to God's Glory, and our own Benefit and Advantage.

(3.) And a far greater Evidence is given in this Case many Times, to make *Divine Judgments manifest*, by the fair and legible *Impression and Image* of the very Offence itself, upon the Punishment inflicted. The *drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptians* in the *Red Sea*, was a Punishment so like their Sin in *drown-*
ing.

ing *all the male Children of the Israelites in the River*; the burning *Nadab and Abihu with a strange Fire from Heaven*; was a Divine Stroke so aptly suited to their Offence in offering Incense with *strange Fire to Heaven*; the incestuous Defilement of *David's Concubines by Absalom*, had so express a Signature of the Defilement of *Uriah's Wife by David*; and to mention no more Examples at present, the *cutting off the Thumbs and great Toes of Adonibezek himself*, was so signal a Requital of the like Cruelty shewed by him to seventy *Kings* before, that no Man needs to doubt the Lawfulness of calling them by the Name they have always borne, that of remarkable Divine Judgments. And it can rationally be no Matter of Scruple to any one, to give Providences of the like Stamp the same Name still.

(4.) And it makes much to the strengthening the Evidence in such Matters, when such remarkable *divine Strokes tread close upon the Heels of some notorious Offence*, as oftentimes they do; yea, so close as to surprize the Offender in the very Act. The striking the *Sodomites blind* in the very Attempt of a foul Sin not to be named; and the firing of the whole *City* the next Morning with a Storm of flaming Brimstone; the *cleaving of the Earth* to swallow *Korah* and his Company, even whilst they stood daringly in the Face of God and the Congregation, to avouch a foul Rebellion against *Moses*, and a sacrilegious Usurpation of *Aaron's Priesthood*, the *running through of Zimri and Cosbi*, in the very Act of bold and audacious Uncleanness; the *slaying of Belshazzar the very Night* following his profane Debauch, acted by the Abuse of *God's consecrated Vessels to Drunkenness*, at an *Idol's Feast*; the turning of his Grandfather *Nebuchadnezzar* a grazing among Oxen, when that vaunting Brag was scarce out of his Mouth, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the House of the Kingdom, by the Might of my Power?* the smiting *Ananias and Sapphira*

dead, with a Lye in their Mouths to cover their Sacrilege; the *eating up Herod* by *Worms*, so closely attending upon his owning the blasphemous Flattery of the People: And many more like Instances to these, none ever gave a *softer Title* to, than that of *divine Judgments*. And wherefore the *Drunkard's* breaking his Neck in his Drunkenness, and the hectoring *Challengers* being slain in a Duel, and the *perjured* Persons being smitten dumb or dead in his Perjury, and the like penal Events befalling other Sinners in the very Act of other Sins of as heinous a Nature, may not still, by a Parity of Reason, pass for Providences of the same Denomination, I cannot imagine.

(5.) When such *penal Providences* are the evident and notorious Consequents of provoking and daring *Appeals, Applications, or Addresses to God* of any Kind; or of *Contests with him*: There is all the Reason in the World why we should take them for *divine Judgments*, extorted by an impious Importunity, or provoking Insolence.

(1.) In Case of *Appeals* to God, *implicit* or *explicit*, When the *bitter Water*, under the Law, envenomed by the Imprecation of the disloyal Wife against herself, in case she was guilty of the Fact she was suspected of, *caused her Belly to swell, and her Thigh to rot*; the *implicit Appeal* to God's Decision in this Case, made the Event evidently to be a divine Judgment. When *Korah* and his Accomplices dare put it to a divine Determination, *whether they had not as much Right to offer Incense as Aaron and his Sons*, the Event in this Case declared, that God judged the Cause in which he was thus appealed to against them? And when the wicked *Jews*, by tumultuous Outcries, call on *Pilate* to *crucify Jesus* for a Malefactor, and encourage him, when his Conscience boggles at so foul an Act of Injustice, with this fearful Imprecation, (in the Nature of such an *Appeal*) that if he were not guilty, God would lay *his Blood on them and their Children*; and the Event of so many Ages hath declared the said Guilt not to be

be yet washed off from their whole Posterity : None but an *hardened Jew* will ever doubt, whether there be a *divine Judgment* in this Case or no. Lastly, when holy *Job*, against the unjust Charges of his censorious Friends, who, among other Crimes, taxed him with *breaking the Arms of the Fatherless*, i. e. that by his Power he had so crushed them, that they were disabled to maintain their Right against him, had appealed to God for his Vindication, and imprecated against himself, that if he were guilty of this Crime, *his Arm might fall from his Shoulder-Blade, and be broken from the Bone*, i. e. that the Flesh might rot from the Bone, till his Arm fell from his Shoulder; if a little after, that *Arm had dropped off* according to his Execration, and some concurring Evidence withal had appeared to prove him guilty of the Fact which he so disclaimed; I say, if it had so fallen out, which it did not, because he was innocent, had not his Friends been justified; if they had cried out in the Words of the Psalmist, *Behold! the Lord is known by the Judgment that he executeth!*

(2.) In Case of *Address* or *Application* to him, in Matters of another Nature. As in *promissory Oaths*, or which in Substance is all one, *Imprecations* of God's Vengeance, upon Non-performance of what Men undertake to do. Which *Addresses* are either *serious* or *customary*. And in both Sorts, *God's Judgments* may be manifested, as the Circumstances may be.

(1.) In *serious Addresses* of this Kind. As in the Case of the Children of *Israel*, when they were obliged to say *Amen* to the *fearful Curses* annexed to the Law; they did therein implicitly address themselves to God, and pray, that all those Curses, in Case of Disobedience to that Law, might befall them; which Curses are therefore called the *Curses of the Covenant*, because they covenanted with God upon that Penalty to keep his Commandments there mentioned. And therefore, afterwards, when God had executed those Severities upon them, which made all the Neighbour

Nations to enquire, *Wherefore the Lord had dealt so with them?* Men are directed by God to answer, *Because they have forsaken the Covenant of the Lord, the Anger of the Lord was kindled against this Land to bring upon it all the Curses written in this Book.* And he moreover tells them, that they need not fear offending by a *rash Censure*, where God's Judgments, with the Causes of them were so manifest. For *though secret Things belong to God*, i. e. in dark Cases, we must not be too forward to pass our Sentence upon God's providential Proceedings; yet *Things revealed*, (as such Judgments inflicted upon such a *Forfeiture* by Covenant betwixt God and a People are) *belong to us and our Children*, to interpret and improve them. And the like may be the Case of *particular Persons*, when they vow and solemnly covenant with God to leave such Vices, and amend their Lives; and to bind themselves the more firmly, imprecate such Evils upon themselves, in Case they fail in Performance. Of which there is a notable Instance in one of our late Writers, of Sir *Jervase Ellowis*, as he calls him, who at the Place of Execution, took notice to all the People present, of *God's just Judgment* that brought him to that *End*: For that he had solemnly (being given to *Gaming*) upon some special Occasion, prayed to God, *That if he did so any more, he might be hanged; and having broken Promise with God, he had brought his own Wish upon him.*

(2.) In *customary Addresses* of that Nature; when Men, upon every slight Occasion, imprecate in the Form of a *customary Wish*, as a vain *Parentesis* in Discourse, with some Persons too frequent, any Evil upon themselves, to back every slight Purpose, or trivial Promise, that drops unadvisedly from their Lips: These Men, though they use not God's Name explicitly in such Forms of Discourse, and yet too often even that is done, [*I wish to God, &c.*] is too frequent a Phrase, yet they do imply it, and it hath the Force of an Application to God, to inflict such

an Evil on them. Now, if when Men fail, as too often they do, in those unadvised Promises of theirs, and God brings the Calamity they wished upon them, I should not scruple in such a Case to look on it as the Execution of a divine Judgment, to warn People, how they use any Expressions wherein *God's Name* is concerned, in a *slight and customary* Manner. And I am perswaded, if it were well observed, God doth to very many Persons of lewd Tongues, perform in Earnest, what they so often inconsiderately imprecate in this World: And doubt he doth so to many more in another World, where their *God-damn-me's* and the *Devil-take-me's*, and the like familiar Forms of customary Discourse with prophane Men, are, with the stinging Attestations of their own Consciences to God's Justice therein, sadly verified upon them to all Eternity.

(3.) In Case of *Contests with God*, *God's Judgments* are often *manifested*, and made known to be what indeed they are. As,

(1.) When they light upon the *furious Maintainers* of a *false Religion* against the *true*: Especially, if in a publick and notorious *Competition*, God be, as it were, *challenged* to appear in the Vindication of his Truth. Which was the Case of *Baal's Priests* in their notable Contest with *Elijah*, wherein God brought them to publick Execution, by a miraculous Confutation in the Presence of all *Israel*.

(2.) When such *divine Severities* befall the Professors and Propugners of *Atheism and Irreligion*, in Opposition to *all Religion*. If such Persons *die not the common Death of other Men*, the common Vote of Mankind pronounceth them to be executed by a *Divine Judgment*; as appears by the Censures passed by Heathens themselves upon the strange Ends of *Diagoras, Protagoras, Bion, Theodorus, Epicurus, Pherecides* and others, who either were, or were generally reputed, *Atheists* among them; and by those of the Holy Scriptures on *Pharaoh*, and of the Ecclesi-

astical Writers on *Caligula, Maximinus, Julian,* and many other Atheistical and prophane Promoters of Irreligion.

(3.) When the like severe Providences befall such, as though they profess the *true Religion*, yet because they make Use of that Profession only as a *Mask* to cover those Designs against it, which they dare not carry on with open Face, God fore-dooms in the Scripture, as guilty of most pernicious Opposition against it, to a notable and signal Ruin and Destruction. As in the Case of the *great Antichrist*, when God, having *revealed that wicked one fully*, shall finally destroy both him and his Seat; where *sitting in the Temple of God*, he acts the *Devil in God's Name*, by *satanical Signs and lying Wonders*; both the Church Militant and Triumphant are called on to acknowledge and *rejoice* in the *just Judgments* of God executed on him and his Adherents.

(6.) It is no slight Evidence to a *Divine Judgment*, when, as it often falls out, an *Offender's Conscience* under such a remarkable Stroke of God's Hand, *owns* it as the just Punishment of such a particular notorious Crime; and *gives Glory to God*, (with *Achan*) by confessing it before the World. When *Aconibezek*, convicted by his own Conscience, cries out, *As I have done, so hath God requited me*; and *Joseph's Brethren*, in the Danger they were in to be executed for *Spies* in *Egypt*, charge themselves with the Guilt of their Envy and Cruelty against their Brother, and acknowledge, that *therefore that Distress came upon them*; and when *Malefactors* at the Place of *Execution*, and *debauched Livers* in some notable Calamities, and especially in the near Prospect of *Death* and *Eternity*, under some signal Stroke of God's Hand, accuse themselves, and attribute those Severities to their particular Crimes; what Reason hath any Man to give their Sufferings a *milder Name* than they give them themselves?

And thus have I given you the best *Characters* I could, by which to discern *divine Judgments* from

Provi-

Providences of a like Severity, befalling Men on the other Accounts; my *fifth Head*.

VI. The *sixth* follows, to wit, [*To give you Directions in the making Application of Divine Judgments to particular Cases, without offending against Justice or Charity.*]

The Reason why such Directions are needful, is very evident: For we are forbidden by our Saviour, to judge our Brethren, *lest we also be judged*. And in the noted Cases of those on whom the *Tower in Siloe* fell, and those whose blood Pilate mingled with the *Sacrifices*; our Lord seems to take the Part of the Sufferers against their Censurers. And the Miscarriage of *Job's Friends* in their Dealings with him, is by God himself expressly condemned. Wherefore it is meet this Case should be carefully stated, that we may in the present Argument be satisfied, how far we may lawfully go in applying God's Judgments, so as to preserve ourselves from such Errors. And in Answer to this Case, I shall, as I did on the former Head, first premise some *Grounds* to proceed on; and thence proceed to the *direct Solution* of it according to them.

(1.) The *Grounds* which I shall premise are these.

(1.) That it follows from what was said on the former Head, that in such Applications of divine Judgments to particular Cases, we are to be very cautious and circumspect.

(2.) And yet it does not follow, that we are totally obliged to forbear them. Yea, rather there are divers Arguments from Scripture, which give great Countenance, and in some Cases great Encouragement, to the making of them.

(1.) As first, the *Text* itself, which asserts such Judgments to be Means whereby God is made known; will necessarily infer, that in order to the making this Use of them, we must be allowed the Liberty of discreet and considerate Application of them; for to suppose a notable Judgment executed with signal Manifestation

festation of a divine Hand therein, and of Purpose designed for Men to take Notice of it; and yet not to allow them to observe it in those Circumstances which render it most observeable, all which Circumstances are necessarily annexed to particular Cases, implies a Contradiction.

(2.) The Scripture tells us of Holy Men who have made such *particular Applications*, and have not been *blamed*, but rather *commended* for it; and their Examples left on sacred Record for the Imitation of future Times; it is given as a honourable Character in general of good and holy Men, that because they have *Pleasure* in that Employment, they *seek out the great Works of the Lord*, of which these judicial Providences are a special Part. And holy *David* propounds himself in particular, as an encouraging Example to patient Expectation of the Issue in that stumbling Case of divine Providence, (*the notable Prosperity of some notorious wicked Men*) telling us, that *he himself had seen some such in great Power*, probably *Saul* and his profane Courtiers and Favourites, *flourishing like a Green Bay-Tree*; whom yet he observed in the Issue notably extirpated, so that *they could not be found*. And that notable Speech of *Hezekiah* to the *Levites*, is recorded to his Commendation, as a considerable Part of that which gave him just Title to that honourable Character, that *he did that which was right in the Sight of the Lord, according to all that his Father David had done*; wherein he observes particularly, though with a Reflection upon his Father *Abaz*, that the Lord had lately delivered *Judah* to *Trouble and Astonishment, and Hissing, and that their Fathers fell by the Sword, and their Sons and Daughters, and Wives*, were yet in Captivity, for the Neglect of *God's House*; which he thence quickens the *Priests and Levites* for the future to take more Care of.

(3.) Good Men in general are encouraged with the promised Prospect of Divine Judgments on some notorious

ous wicked Men. *When the Wicked*, such whose Prosperity was a Temptation to good Men to *fret* and be *envious* against them, *are cut off*, *thou*, says the Psalmist to the Man whom he encourageth to *wait on the Lord*, and *keep his Way*, *shall see it*, i. e. so as to take Notice of it to thy great Satisfaction and Encouragement to depend on God for the future. And elsewhere, the *Righteous* is told, that when the notorious oppressing Judges, against whom that Psalm is directed, shall be *taken away as with a Whirlwind*, living, and in *God's Wrath*, i. e. brought in that Prime of their Prosperity to a sudden and violent End, that he shall *rejoice when he seeth the Vengeance*, and *wash his Feet in the Blood of the Wicked*, i. e. in a Kind of holy Triumph for the Manifestation of Divine Justice, shall even trample upon them when they lie in their Blood, without fear of Defilement; to which in other Cases the Jews, by the Law, for touching any thing of a dead Corpse were liable, any more than if they had *washed their Feet in Water*.

(4.) And *Sinners* are *blamed* for not drawing Arguments of *Caution* and *Reformation* from the particular Instances of God's Judgments in their Days. As *Belshazzar*, for that when he saw and knew how God had dealt with his proud *Grandfather Nebuchadnezzar*, he notwithstanding *lifted himself up against the same God*, before whom he ought on that Consideration to *have been humbled*; and the remaining *Tribes of Judah and Benjamin* are severely taxed, for that *when they saw* that God had rejected and sent into Captivity the *ten Tribes*, their Brethren, for their Idolatry; yet *they* feared not, but went on confidently in the same provoking Sin themselves; and it is not to be understood how any Persons can be obliged to take *warning* from particular Examples, if they be not allowed to apply such Providences of God to them, in those Particulars from whence that *Caution* is to be gathered.

(3.) Wherefore we must find out some *other Interpretation* of those *Scriptures*, which seem totally to prohibit all Applications of Divine Judgments to particular Cases; and particularly of *those before mentioned*. And that as to them at least is a Matter of no great Difficulty. For the first of them forbids *one Christian*, indeed to *judge another*; but it is only a rash and a harsh censuring Christian Brethren; as the Pharisees were wont to do, even for the smallest Faults; and that when the Censurers themselves, it may be, as they indulge themselves in greater, such as are like *Beams* to the other's *Motes*, as appears, *v. 2.* that is there forbidden. And the Blame which in the *second Text*, the Relaters of the *Fall of the Tower of Siloe*, and the mixing the *Blood of the Galileans with their Sacrifices* by Pilate, did incur; was not barely for taking Notice of these Events as Divine Judgments, but for judging the Persons in a like *Pharisaical Pride*, *greater Sinners than others*, and than themselves in particular, having no other Evidence to ground that Censure, than that what they suffered was more severe than what usually befell others; which indeed was none at all. And *Job's* Friends (the *third Text*) were censured by God for making the like uncharitable and unwarrantable Inference from his providential Severities upon *Job*. So that all these Scriptures thus interpreted, as indeed they must be, make nothing against the Lawfulness of a modest, sober, prudent, and discreet Application of Divine Judgments to particular Cases, seeing in an Application so qualified, we shall be secure from offending against *Justice or Charity*.

(2.) And therefore I proceed, in the next Place, to give you the Directions promised you to preserve you from so offending, in like Applications of *Divine Severities*.

(1.) *First* then, privately and in our own Bosoms, we may with more Freedom and Latitude make such Applications, than we may *discourse* them withal to others; if withal we take Care to turn our inward
Senti-

Sentiments only to those Uses which reflect Glory to God, and Benefit to ourselves; without gratifying any unlawful Passion, apt on such Occasions to be stirred towards our suffering Brethren and Neighbours. And yet,

(2.) When *God's Providence* itself makes any Case *notorious* by producing an Offender, as it were, and chastising him upon a *publick Theatre*, the Case being clear and evident of itself in the Eyes of all Men; no Man is then bound up from bearing his Part in the *Publick Discourse*; but (as he hath a Call either by Office, or occasional Charity to the Souls of Men to take Notice of it) every one may, nay ought, to serve God's Design therein, by making Use of it for others, as well as his own *Edification*. And it is related as a Thing imitable in the Primitive Christians, that they interpreted the sudden Deaths of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, as remarkable Judgments of God, and not only were possessed with great Fear themselves on that Occasion, but also derived that Fear to many others, by publishing it, so that *they feared* likewise as many as *heard* of it.

(3.) We are not so much in Danger of *offending against Justice or Charity* in the Application of divine Judgments, when they befall *great Communities* and Societies of Men, as when they light only on *particular Persons*, or *smaller Parties*. For when Nations and other great Communities fall under great *Epidemical Calamities*, wherein *every Member* some Way or other suffers, or at least is endangered to suffer; there God himself expects his Hand should be publicly acknowledged, and due Means used by religious Addresses to him solemnly and generally made for the removing of them; and in them requires that *each Member* bear a Part, and accuse himself and be deeply humbled, as being a Partaker in that Guilt which procured them; so that what *every one* is obliged to own, is without Injury or Breach of Charity imputable to them all. Whereas there are very few *private Cases*,

Cases, wherein the Persons suffering can be convincingly brought by others under a like Obligation, to own and acknowledge the Particulars charged on them by their Censurers, as the Causes for which they so suffer; and so we are endangered to charge them at Adventure, and therein to be unjust and uncharitable.

(4.) We run less Hazard of violating *Justice* and *Charity*, in applying such *Divine Strokes*, as *Judgments* to some Persons, than to others. For whereas there are some *notoriously bad Men*, who *publish their Sin as Sodom*, and proclaim themselves to have no Fear of God before their Eyes, being altogether become filthy or sinking, as the *Margin* hath it, in the Nostrils of all serious and sober Persons; so that no *Charity*, be it never so large, except it be wilfully blind withal, can judge better of them; when any remarkable Hand of God finds these Persons out, to seize them for publick exemplary Punishment, I cannot see, why we may not, without any Hesitation in a Case so plain, think and say, *This is a remarkable Judgment of God; and a fair Warning to all Men to avoid such Courses*. And especially if such Persons have arrived to that Height of professed Wickedness, as to *glory in their Shame* at that Rate, as to set themselves down in the *Seat of the Scornful*, and scoff Religion and Virtue out of Countenance, as a Thing despicable and contemptible; and to own themselves in all Companies, as the publick *Hellors* and Champions of Prophaneness and Impiety, and professed *Persecuters* of all Persons that dare appear on the Side of God and Goodness. For in such Cases, as I told you before, the Opinion of all the World justifies us, in making the severest Reflections upon their Sufferings.

But when Sufferers, though the Hand of God lie heavy upon them, are either eminently *good Men*, or such as in the Judgment of rational Charity we are bound to *think well of* for the Main, though they have their Allay of human Frailty, and are *Gold*, though mixed with *Dross*, yea, or such, as there is Hope they may

may become *better*, because there is nothing that declares them *desperately* and *incorrigibly bad*: We are towards all these Sorts of Men to proceed in censuring with far greater Caution, and the better they are, the more must be observed; according to the *following Measures*.

(1.) That we endeavour to be as sparing in applying these Sorts of Divine Providences, to the Cases of particular Persons under the former Characters, as God is in inflicting them; and appear as loth and unwilling to do the one, as he to do the other. For it is very uncharitable for any Man to be over-forward in crying out, upon every unusual Stroke upon another, *a Judgment! a Judgment!* because thereby he cruelly vexeth his Brother's Sores; a Thing which is done by nothing more than by exaggerating his Calamities, with the Representation of God's Displeasure testified in them. Besides, that the *Hastiness* of Men in such Applications looks too much like that Disposition which *Charity* disclaims, of rejoicing in Iniquity, *i. e.* in the Opportunity of colourably laying a Criminal Matter to one's Brother's Charge, without staying to examine what Ground there is for it; as on the contrary, to rejoice in the Truth, *i. e.* to be glad when by the Discovery of the Truth, our own and others Suspicions or Misapprehensions concerning him are removed, and he vindicated, is a charitable Temper, as the Apostle describes it.

(2.) That we do not first fancy a Divine Judgment in our own Thoughts to have befallen such a *Person* or *Party* as we do not affect; and then *search out Iniquities*, (in the Psalmist's Phrase) or make a strict Inquisition, to find out criminal Matters in him to apply it unto, for the Justification of our own Censure. For this is a preposterous inverting of the Rules of Justice, which is never wont to pronounce Sentence first, at all Adventure, and then examine the *Cause*, or rather, *whether there be any Cause*; and a great Breach of *Charity* also, as implying a malicious Design against
our

our Brother, which we seek an Opportunity to execute.

This seems to be the Fault of those *Disciples* themselves, who enquired of Christ concerning the *Man that was born blind*; for they first resolve upon it, that this was a *Judgment of God* on him for *some Sin*; and then they came to our Saviour to resolve them, *for whose Sin it was, his own or his Parents?* And it seems evident, by the whole Carriage of their Discourses, that *Job's Friends*, though they unanimously first conclude among themselves, that his *Sufferings* were *divine Judgments* upon him for some foul Crime, yet they are at a Loss what Crime of that Nature to find him guilty of; and therefore they tax him at all Adventure, with all the horrid Crimes they can imagine, to draw a Confession from him at least of some of them, for the Justification of their own uncharitable Censure.

(3.) That we do not *hastily* call such severe Providences of God towards such particular Persons, *Judgments*, whom we can charge with nothing that is notoriously sinful, in the *general Judgment* of all *Mankind*, or at least, of all *Christians*: For it is a great Piece of *Uncharitableness*, as well as *Injustice*, which is too ordinarily practised, in such Places where the common Christianity is crumbled into *Sects* and *Parties*, for Dissenters of all Sides to impute the Sufferings befalling their *Opposites* to divine Displeasure against them, for holding such Opinions as differ from theirs, or practising in some Particulars otherwise than they do. Now this ariseth ordinarily from a *partial Fondness* which every one hath for his *own Opinion* or *Way*; which inclines him to think God hath as great a *Kindness* for it as himself, and his Party have; and to conclude all his Providences to be accordingly engaged to serve under those Banners of Distinction, under which he hath lifted himself; whence such Persons find it easy (upon every unusual Stroke of God upon any that are not every Way agreeable to their Humour)

Humour) to conclude, that the very Point in Difference betwixt them is judged by God and their Opposites, confuted from Heaven by a *Demonstration* of divine Displeasure against them. And such an unhappy Paralogism as this, we are told by our Historians, it was, which in the dark Times of Popery gave the Cause, in an Opinion of an whole Synod, against the married Clergy, when the *Side of the Room where the Maintainers of it sat fell down, killing some, and hurting others*. For thereupon they that were for *Priest's single Life*, cried down the Cause of the fallen Party with them, as witnessed against by God himself; and by that sorry Argument and Noise prevailed. Now against this great Mistake, by the Way, we shall never be sufficiently armed, except we govern our Apprehensions by these *two Principles*:

(1.) That God never appointed the *dark Rule of Providence* (to us it is no other) to judge Causes by, whether right or wrong, good or bad. Oftentimes, for *secret Ends* of his own, he blasts a good, and prospers a bad Cause, as the *bad Cause* of the *Benjamites*, in two set Battles, against the *good Cause* of the eleven Tribes: And the horrid and blasphemous Imposture of the *Mahometans* hath now, for many Ages, by the Permission of Providence, prospered wonderfully against the greatest Part of the *Christian World*.

(2.) That *God's great and signal Judgments*, of which we are discoursing, are now-a-days rarely inflicted, but for such Crimes as are generally condemned in the *Judgment of all Mankind*, or, at least, the *Generality of Christians*, according as he designs the Notice of them to be spread in a greater or narrower Compass. And the Reason is evident, to wit, because it cannot otherwise be rationally expected, the Justice of them should be clearly and convincingly owned, and so the Good they are intended for must needs be hazarded to so many as are dissatisfied in the Merit of the Cause that is taken to procure them. But when a divine Severity justly makes an Example

F

of

of any Person in the general Opinion notoriously criminal; they are *all inexcusable, who thenceforward do the same Things they condemned in another*, as the Apostle saith, and confess God's Judgment to have righteously befallen him for.

(4.) That we *publish not on the House Tops*, in our Saviour's Phrase on another Occasion, that which is, it may be, *whispered in our Ears* only; and few, possibly no other, Persons know of. For it may so fall out, that our intimate *Acquaintance* with some Men, and their Circumstances, may give us Knowledge of their *particular Vices*, secret as to all the rest of the World; and of God's *secret Strokes* befalling them in their Persons or private Concerns, which we in our own Thoughts may rationally conclude to be divine Judgments inflicted for them. Now in such Cases, though we may with great Charity declare our Apprehensions hereof to the *Parties concerned* themselves, and admonish, and exhort them on that Occasion; yet it were great Uncharitableness to publish to others either the *one* or the *other*.

For, when God intends, as appears by his Way of proceeding therein, only a *private Correction*, it must proceed from a *Defect of Charity* in us, if we, by divulging it, turn it into a *publick Execution*, to the exposing our Brother to an open Shame. And the very Justice of every *petty School* may convince us of the Evil of so doing; wherein the Corrections given within those Walls are forbidden to be divulged, under a like Penalty to that which the disgraced School-fellow suffered.

(5.) That we *apply not the severe Strokes of God* upon our Neighbour to the Satisfaction of our *private Spleen* and *vengeful Humour*: Which is too ordinary, when we think such as lie under them have wronged us, or it may be they really have so, and we conclude, their Sufferings are *divine Judgments* befallen them on our Quarrel. This was the uncharitable Censure of *Shimei* against *David*, when he
tells

tells him that *God had avenged on him the Blood of the House of Saul*, by the *Rebellion of Absalom*: For it is plain by the Text, that *Shimei* was of the very *Family of Saul*; and it may be looked upon himself, as in some probable Vicinity to the *Crown*, if the Succession of it had continued in *that Family*. At least it is probable, that by the translating it from thence, he found his Hopes, as to those Preferments and other Advantages which usually are attained at Court by those of the royal Blood, blasted and defeated. It is true indeed that God's Justice doth sometimes appear in the remarkable Vindication of eminently good Men's, and his useful Instruments Causes: But for every ordinary Person, upon every petty trifling Injury, to expect that he should do the like for him, or suppose he doth it, is too great a Presumption.

(6.) That we judge not our Brethren's *Estate toward God*, and much less their *future Estate*, from the most evident Judgments temporally befalling them.

(1.) Not their *present Estate towards God*. For a fore Judgment may befall a Man greatly in God's Favour, for a foul Crime; as in the Case of the *Death of David's Child*, inflicted, even after his Repentance, for those heinous Sins of *Adultery* and *Murder*; because he had by them *caused the Enemies of God to blaspheme*; doth evidently appear.

(2.) And much less must we thence judge their *future Estate* in another World: For there is no sufficient Cause to judge even *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the inquisitive *Bethshemites*, *Uzzab*, and others, damned; though God smote them dead in unwarrantable Actions. Yea, even *Moses* and *Aaron* themselves died by a divine Sentence in the Wilderness for their *Sin at Meribah*: And yet one of them, (*Moses*) we have sufficient Evidence is in Glory, and have no Reason to doubt the Case of the other. Yea, Men may be *judged of the Lord*, in the Apostle's Supposition, when chastened with Sicknes and Death extraordinary, *that they may not be condemned with the*

World: And an Offender *delivered even to Satan*, may suffer to the *Destruction of the Flesh*, that his Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord, i. e. in the private Judgment which he undergoes from the Lord at his Death.

(7.) That we assign not *particular Sins* as the special Causes of a divine Judgment too *peremptorily*; except where the Circumstances notoriously evince it by the *Rules before given*, or some of them at least. For, if we be therein mistaken in our Judgment; yea, if there be no moral Certainty that we are not mistaken, (such as may rationally convince the Persons concerned and others thereof) the *End*, which we are supposed to design by such Application, (to wit, to render the *particular Sin* to which we attribute the procuring that Judgment more *formidable*) is lost upon those whom we particularly intend to benefit by it, and others too; and we ourselves are liable to be censured, for putting an uncharitable Brand upon our own Brother without a Cause.

(8.) That we *vaunt* not, or *magnify ourselves* against our suffering Brother, by comparing ourselves with him, as if we were therefore the *better Men*, because we *fare better* at God's Hands than he. This is one Property of *Charity*, (among the many excellent Characters given it by the Apostle) that it *vaunts not itself*, (i. e. with the Diminution of a Man's Brethren; for else it were rather a Description of Humility than Charity) nor is, upon such an Account, *puffed up*. And the most uncharitable Account upon which any Man can *vaunt* to the lessening of his Brother, is, when it is done meerly upon the Difference that God's only Pleasure makes betwixt the one and the other. This (among many others) was one great Piece of Uncharitableness in *Job's Friends*, that having in his sad Sufferings taxed him with being of the Number of those whom God had signally branded with remarkable Judgments, and a Partner in Guilt with those of the *old World*, whose Foundation was *overflown with a Flood*

Flood, though he were differenced in his Punishment, being a Sufferer by the contrary Element of *Fire*; they in the mean while boast, that *their Substance was not cut down*, as being Men more acquainted with God, more *humble*, more *innocent*; as they imply, when they advise *Job*, upon their Experience, to become so too.

(9.) That we may make no Man's *Religious Living* formerly, or eminent *Profession* of it, (no, not though we have some Cause to think him declined from it now) by objecting it to him under suffering, a *Part* of his *Calamity*; nor occasion him, whilst he suffers under *God's Hand*, to suffer for *his Sake* too: A Thing too usual when *bad* Men apply the Judgments of God, (or those which they interpret to be such) to *good* Men, or those who have had a Reputation to be such, beyond their Neighbours. For this is to give them (as the Persecutors did to our Saviour) *Gall and Vinegar to drink*, when they have already *Bitterness* enough upon their Spirits from the *Cup* of their *Cross*, that God appoints them to *drink off*. This was to *David*, as he tells us, *like a Sword in his Bones*, when prophane Men said to him in his Affliction, *where is now thy God?* And when they cast in his Teeth, as their Successors did afterwards in our Saviour's, his former *trusting in God*, as if it had either been hypocritical, or (if real) misplaced on one that had thus forsaken him. Now to deal thus with our Neighbour, is at all Times greatly uncharitable. For it either argues an hard *Censure* of him that he is an *Hypocrite*; or a greater and fouler *Affront*, if we do not so esteem him; for then we *turn* (as the same Psalmist elsewhere taxeth Men of the same uncharitable Temper) *his Glory into Shame*, and endeavour to make that a Matter of Disgrace to him, which is really most commendable.

(10.) In a Word; that we do not *rejoice*, *insult*, or *triumph* over any Man under God's Hand, upon any Account; much less *revile*, and *reproach* him; but really *pity*, *bewail*, and *condole* with him rather;

and (as we have Opportunity) *instruct, admonish, comfort, and pray* for him. For to do the former, is the constant Guise of those that (in the Character of God's Holy Spirit in the Scripture) are marked for *wicked Men*; the Heathen *Edomites* were such, and they *rejoiced in the Day of Judah's Distress*. David's *Enemies*, (being so to him on God's Account) were such, and in his *Adversity they rejoiced*. Our Saviour's *Persecutors* were such, as they *judged him smitten of God*, they *shaked their Heads* at him upon the Cross, and reviled him with most unfavoury and reproachful Speeches.

And although there be several Passages in Scripture which seem to propound God's Judgments as a *glad Spectacle* to good Men, and a Matter of rejoicing, when they befall those that are notoriously wicked; as when it is prophesied, *That the Righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the Vengeance, &c.* And when God calls on all the Saints even in Glory, the *holy Prophets and Apostles* especially, to rejoice and triumph over *Antichristian Babylon*.

Yet it is to be observed, that these and the like Texts relate only to such as were God's *publick and notorious Enemies*; and the Joy and Triumph required or allowed, in their Destruction, is only upon Account of the Success of his Cause against them, and the Vindication of his Glory and Interests, as appears remarkably in the *Psalms* quoted, wherein he tells us, how the Observers should express their Joy, to wit, by taking Notice, that *verily there is a Reward for the Righteous*, and that *verily he is a God that judgeth in the Earth*.

But the latter Dispositions and Deportments are recommended to us by the Examples of the best Men, and most eminent of Saints. When *Job's Friends* had dealt so uncharitably with him, he tells them what a different Usage they should have found from him, *if their Souls had been in his Soul's Stead*; and assures them, that though he could in such a Case have *spoken*

as

as they did to him now, and beaped up Words against them, and shaken his Head at their Calamity, as they used him; yet he would have strengthened them with his Mouth, and the moving of his Lips should have asswaged their Grief. And when David's very bitter Enemies, that insulted over his Calamity, were sick, he cloathed himself with Sackcloth, and his Prayers, though ungratefully received by them, and thrown back in Scorn into his Bosom, whence they proceeded, were heartily and sincerely from that Bosom, poured out to God for them. And our Saviour, the most perfect of Men, to the many Sufferers under God's Hand whom he relieved, was generally so compassionate, that he took on him, by a merciful Sympathy, all the Infirmities that he cured, and bore all his Patients Sickneses. Yea, he could not forbear weeping over the very Prospect of those Tragedies he foretold himself against Jerusalem, though the Shambles of his Prophets, and his own Slaughter-house. And God expects, as well as the Sufferers themselves, that to him that is afflicted Pity should be shewn, especially, if the Hand of the Lord hath touched him; and dislikes that Men, in their Brethrens Calamities, should persecute like him, i. e. take the same Liberty of harsh and severe Usage towards them, as God does, as if they could do it with like Right and Justice as he. In a Word, it is his expresse Command, that to shew ourselves to be of the same Mind towards another, we not only rejoice with them that rejoice, but weep also with those that weep. And thus I discharge this sixth Head also.

VII. Come we now to the seventh and last, to draw such Inferences from this whole Discourse as may be of Use and Advantage to us.

[1. And first, I infer the great Reason that there is for a general Judgment in another World: For, seeing God is known by the Judgment that he executeth; and all that which he executeth here, extends but to a few Offenders; and it may be, the Notice taken of

those Executions that are made, reacheth but a *small Part* of Mankind; it stands with the highest Reason, that there should be a Time wherein all the World may see, even those that *while his Hand was lifted up on Earth would not see*, that *just and true are his Judgments*. Besides, by the Rareness of the *Judgments he executeth* here, instead of *being known* as he ought, he is by many apt to be *misunderstood*, whilst they are generally stumbled at his letting so many notorious Offenders escape for one that he punisheth; and those that escape here, many Times are the greatest and most prosperous of Men, that even dare his Justice, by *setting their Mouths against the Heavens* themselves. Wherefore, that he may make it known, that he spareth not so many *high and mighty Offenders*, either through Impotency, or Partiality, it is easy to infer, that there must be such a Day, wherein *all Men, whether they be small or great, shall stand before him, and be judged according to their Works*.

[2. I infer, that those Men *do God great Disservice*, who either carelessly *overlook*, or designedly endeavour to *suppress* and keep from the Notice of the World, these *remarkable divine Judgments*; or, when by reason of their own publick Circumstances, they cannot but be taken Notice of by others, attempt to slur, and stifle as much as they can, the Evidence of those Particularities which so much conduce to the preserving and propagating the *Knowledge of God* in the World. Those of the former Sort are injurious in an high Degree to God; who, when he exposeth his glorious Attributes to View as on a *Theatre*, will not vouchsafe to be *Spectators* of them. But those of the latter Rank are prodigiously wicked; and yet too many even of these are to be found in all Ages of the World, who study to darken God's Glory in such remarkable Judgments, and to lead the Apprehensions that People naturally are apt to have of them, as far from God and Providence as they can find any Colour

to do. Thus the *Egyptian Magicians*, encouraged by a prophane atheistical King, as well as prompted thereto, by their own Malice, emulated the Miracles that *Moses* did; and by frequent Attempts to do the like endeavoured to persuade the People, that there was nothing in them beyond the Power of created Beings to effect; till God at last, in the *Plague of the Lice*, drew from them an unwilling Confession, that neither they, nor their Master the Devil, could imitate it, and that therefore it was the *Finger of God*. And it seems to me, that the *Priests and Diviners* of the *Philistines* were willing, when they were called into Consultation what to do with the *Ark of God*, to have carried on as bad a Design, and to have persuaded both themselves and the People that it was a disputable Case, *whether the God of Israel* had inflicted those Judgments upon them, which they had suffered; or whether it were a meer *Chance that had befallen them*. And therefore, though they speak some good Words concerning the God of *Israel*, and give their Advice, that if they returned the *Ark*, they shall make him some *Presents* too, it may be forced thereunto, as *Caiaphas* prophesied, by a divine Impulse, yet they contrive to put the Determination of that great Question upon the Issue of such an *odd Experiment*, as without a miraculous Influence of the Lord of all the Creatures upon those that they employed, would in all rational Probability have determined it against God: For it was ten thousand to one Odds, but that the *Kine*, being *milch Kine*, and their *Calves newly taken* from their *Sides*, and *shut up* in their Sight, just as they were put into the Cart, that was by their Advice to carry the *Ark*, being let loose without a Driver, had turned, as Nature would prompt them, the same Way their young Ones had gone, rather than towards the *Land of Israel*. And a foul Scandal it is to the *Christian Name*, that too many of those who bear it, do herein act, as if they joined in Design with the fore-mentioned *Heathens*. For, besides
the

the downright *Atheists*, (too many of whom pass Muster now-a-days under *Christ's* Colours, whom I have before confuted ; the *sottish* and *prophane* Generation of Men are desirous to look beside God in all such Strokes ; least by confessing his Hand in them, they should be obliged to be more religious, than suits the Interest of their Lusts. Whence, in the Calamities which at any Time befall themselves or others, those of them who pretend to but the least Smattering in *Philosophy*, seek for Causes to assign them to, either in the general Order of *Nature*, moved when once set a going, without any special Hand of God governing the Motion of itself ; or in the Influence of *superior Bodies* upon the *inferior*, by the Conjunctions and Oppositions, or other Aspects of *Planets*, in imaginary Houses, which the Inventions of juggling *Astrologers* have built for them in the Heavens to consult and quarrel in, about the Government of the lower World ; or to the *Distempers* at some *Seasons* naturally corrupting the *Elements*, and by them the Bodies, yea, and the very Minds of Men. Others of a lower Rank in their Intellectuals, through an ignorant Malice suspect the *evil Tongues* of some Persons, who have some Way or other, and often undeservedly, gotten an *evil Name* among their Neighbours ; or it may be, accuse the Devil himself for *paying them some ill Turns he owed them*, though they were never known to have carried themselves so towards him as to deserve any such Usage from him. In all which, and the like Conjectures, it is the main Business of the Champions of Ignorance and Prophaneness, to cast a Mist before their own Eyes and other Men's, to obscure the Providence of God in those Judgments which he executeth, lest he should be known by them ; which certainly is a Crime of the greatest Magnitude ; for it argues an *Envy* at the Glory which God's wonderful Providences are wont to procure him in the World, than which there can hardly any Attempt be conceived more *satanical*.

[3. We may hence infer, how great Reason there is, that such *judicial Providences* should be exactly taken Notice of, and with all the notable Circumstances which most manifest God, recorded, and transmitted to Posterity. The learned and judicious Lord *Verulam* takes Notice of it as a Defect in the historical Part of Learning, that there is not extant an impartial and well-attested *Historia Nemeseos*, as he calls it, an Account of the most remarkable Judgments of God on notorious Offenders, and complains of it. And it were to be wished, that God would put it into the Heart of some *supreme Magistrates* to promote so godly a Design by their Authority, that the *great Judgments* of the *King of Kings* and *Lord of Lords* might be preserved in publick avowed *Records*, as their *own Judgments* are; for certainly it would be a great Check to the *Atheism* that so reigns in the World at this Day, to have such publick Testimonies preserved against them to stop their prophane Mouths withal, when they take Liberty to cry down God and Providence. And such a Work cannot be done effectually to such a Purpose, but with their Encouragement and Assistance, who were able to oblige the Relators of such signal providential Strokes, by the sacred Tie of an Oath, to *speak the Truth, all the Truth, and nothing but the Truth*, in God's Cause, as well as Men's; and severely to punish those Persons, who shall appear, upon due Examination, to *lye for God, or against him*. But seeing such a Design is rather to be wished, than hoped to be carried on, in such an Age as this, I forbear to insist longer on this Point, and in the fourth Place infer,

[4. That those private Persons, in the Defect of more publick Endeavours in this Kind, do God *good Service*, and much oblige Posterity, who take what honest Pains they can, in so profitable a Discovery, by enquiring into, and informing themselves and others from good Evidence, of such Instances of God's just Providence, as their Ages, and the Places they

they live in afford : For however, some atheistical Spirits are, according to their Wont, apt to slight and despise them ; yet, Abundance of serious and considering Persons do, and it is to be supposed, will, in After-Ages, make great Advantages by them.

[5. And yet this must be attempted with great Care and Caution, as a Thing on which we cannot lay out too much circumspect Diligence and Industry : Which also follows from my Text and Doctrine. For those Judgments by which the *Lord is known*, must be first known to be, and to be his Judgments ; that is, it must be known that such Things, as to Matter of Fact, are certain ; and that they are accompanied with such Circumstances as carry in them a moral Certainty also, as I before told you, that they are inflicted by God upon such an Account ; because, if there be a rational Doubt of the one, or the other, there must be an equal Uncertainty in the Conclusions drawn from such uncertain Premises.

Wherefore, it is certainly a foul and heinous Crime, and a Thing highly injurious both to God and Man, for any Person or Persons, either out of a misguided Zeal for God, or out of a particular fond *Affection* to any *Party* in Religion, and much more, upon the Account of any more unjustifiable *Passion*, to become a *Forger* of Divine Judgments, or a busy Reporter and Spreader of such Forgeries. For this is to *speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him* ; which *Job* chargeth with great Abhorrency upon his Friends, as judging it a most unbecoming Thing to endeavour to prop up the Cause of the *God of Truth* with *Falsehoods*. Nor indeed is it less *mischievous*, than it is *unsuitable*, to the Interest it pretends to defend : For though one or two such *pious Frauds* may prove at the first, (in some Juncture of Time wherein simple and well-meaning Devotion prevails over the inquisitive Humour of Mankind) to be some Way serviceable to the Design they were coined for : Yet in Process of Time,

Time, as the State of Religion alters, and Men (having, it may be, discovered the Fallacy) grow more nice of Belief in such Matters, the Case is quite different; for then strikes in (ordinarily) the subtil *Atheist* or *Misbeliever*, and aggravates the Flaws he finds in such Stories, as are really obnoxious, to the Blemishing the Reputation of the most undoubted Records of Christianity itself. And it can hardly be imagined what a foul Imputation upon that holy Religion of our blessed Saviour amongst Atheists and other Infidels, those Cart-loads of *Monkish Stories* in the *Romish Church* have occasioned; wherein the *Miracles* of their *fictitious Saints*, and the *Judgments* of God upon their *pretended Adversaries*, are equally numerous; and yet both so grossly contrived, that the Unskilfulness of the bungling Inventers saves the Confuters of them the Pains of any studied Arguments to disprove them. And yet with such a sottish Credulity are the Generality of that Religion possessed, that there is hardly *any one* who was eminently *instrumental* in the *Reformation*, but they can tell you of some *miraculous Judgment* of God that brought him to his End; which they believe with equal Faith to what they have for the Gospel itself; even that of *Luther's Body being carried away out of his Coffin by the Devil*; which he himself lived to disprove by his own Pen.

And it were well if it could be said of them only, that they prop up a Cause with *lying Wonders*, as is prophesied of them, that needs it; and that the indiscreet Zeal of others, who would be thought to have *better Consciences*, as they have, wherein they differ from them, a *better Cause*, did not make Use of their Example too much, and treat their Brethren of different Judgments in the petty Disputes that divide them into Parties, in the same uncharitable Manner. At least it were to be desired, if such hot Spirits will needs continue, with *Solomon's Mad-man*, to cast *Fire-brands* one at another; that they would not, with the
Poet's

Poet's *Prometheus*, *steal Fire from Heaven* to kindle them withal, by forging miraculous Providences to blast the Reputation of those Causes they are prejudiced against, in the Persons of those that defend them.

[6. Lastly, we may learn hence, on all Hands, to make a *more beneficial Use* of God's judicial Providences; to wit, that of the Text, to endeavour to advance in the *Knowledge of God* by them; which Duty, according to the usual Extent of that Phrase in Scripture, includes many Particulars.

(1. As first, if any of us be Sufferers under any such Strokes, as our own Consciences suggest to us are divine Judgments; we are betwixt God and our Souls to endeavour to take up the Controversy which he seems to have with us betimes; and in order thereunto to acknowledge and bewail those known Sins which we are convinced of; and in a more special Manner, those which our Hearts seize on in fresh Pursuit, as the particular Causes of that Displeasure from God, under which we lie; to humble ourselves under his mighty Hand, and remove by serious Reformation and Amendment of Life, *out of his Sight*, whatever is offensive to those *pure Eyes which cannot behold Evil, or look on Iniquity*.

And if it be not clear to us what *particular Quarrel* God hath with us; or that he hath an *especial Cause* given him beyond the ordinary Frailties of Humanity; so that, as to any known great Crime, we are as clear as *Job* himself; yet we are, as he is well advised, and also of himself resolves before that Advice, to say to God, *shew me wherefore thou contendest with me; and that which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done Iniquity, I will do so no more*.

This is to be done betwixt God and our own Consciences, if none but God and they be acquainted with our Circumstances.

But if our Cases and our Crimes too be already by God's Providence exposed to the publick Notice,
it

it is our Duty in this Case to go farther, and to evidence our true Repentance to the World, by a true, free, and ingenious Acknowledgment, *justifying God, and giving Glory to him*, as David and Achab did; and warning others not to offend him in like Manner, by our Example.

And in all these Cases, if the *present Judgment* be upon such Courses taken, removed, and *God's Hand turned away* from us, we are ourselves to take Heed we *sin thus no more, lest a worse Thing come to us*; and not provoke him, by a feigned Humiliation, whilst we are under his correcting Hand, destitute of real Amendment, to do as he threatens, *i. e. punish us seven Times more*, and augment his Severities, till our *Wound become incurable, and past Remedy*.

(2. If we be (as in *Epidemical Judgments*) Sufferers in common with others; our Duty is, instead of shifting off the Blame upon others, each Man in particular to own his own Share in the common Guilt, as *knowing the Plague of his own Heart*, and by true Repentance and Amendment to lessen the publick Load which he hath contributed to enlarge; and call on others, as he hath the Opportunity to do the like: And lastly, when he hath rendred himself fit for that charitable Office to the Publick, by having recovered his own Innocence, to intercede earnestly and affectionately, using his renewed Interest with a reconciled God, for the Society to which he doth belong.

(3. If we be bare *Hearers* or *Beholders* of God's great Severities upon others, and *ourselves free*; we are then,

(1.) *Wisely to consider his Doings*; so as to observe carefully what of God more than ordinarily appears in them; that we may give him the Glory of those Perfections, which he hath thereby rendred most conspicuous, for which those that *have Pleasure in his Works* specially study them.

(2.) And particularly, to endeavour to reduce *God's Providences* of this Kind, as well as all others,

to the Rule of his *written Word*; and observe the Correspondency they bear to each other: For this will serve us to very great Purposes, in order to a firm Faith in him, and Fear of him, when we can say (with *Moses* in the Case of *Nadab* and *Abihu*) *That is that which the Lord hath said.*

(3.) To lay them up in Memory as a choice Treasure, to be made use of when Occasion serves: For God expects his great Works should make deep Impressions in the Minds of Men; and therefore some Interpreters read that Clause of *Psal. cxi.* which we render, *He hath made his wonderful Works to be remembered,* [*Memoriæ consecravit*] he hath devoted, or consecrated them to Remembrance: Wherein they imply, that it carries in it a Kind of *Sacrilege*, to let them slip through our Memories as common and inconsiderable Things. And he takes Notice of it himself as a great Crime in the *Israelites*, *That they remembered not his Hand, how he wrought his Signs in Egypt, and his Wonders in the Field of Zoan.*

(4.) And to improve that Remembrance, as Occasion is offered, by applying it to ourselves and others, according to the Suitableness that those Providences bear to the Cases to which they are applicable. So when the *Israelites* were apt to be afraid of the mighty and numerous Enemies they were to encounter, at their Entrance into *Canaan*; God suitably recalls to their Memories, *what he did to Pharaoh and all Egypt.* And when our Saviour would fortify his Disciples against the Temptations to Compliance with the obstinate and unbelieving *Jews*, in holding out the *Siege of Jerusalem*, out of Affection to their Concerns there, having before told them of *that great Day of the Revelation of the Son of Man* in his Judgments on that City; and that there wanted nothing to compleat its Destruction in Proportion to *Sodom*, but only the removing the *Christians* thence, (as they went afterwards to *Pella* out of the City) in Confor-

mity

raity to *Lot's going out of Sodom* : He bids them to remember *Lot's Wife*, whose Tenderness of her Concerns in *Sodom* made her look back ; and therefore, by God's just Judgment, in the very Place, she was turned into a *Statue of Salt*. And the *Psalmist* comforted himself against God's present Enemies, and their outrageous Insolences, by *remembering God's Judgments of old*.

(5.) And to be sensible of the special *Mercy* and *Goodness* of God to us, whom, it may be he hath as *signally delivered* when we were in equal Guilt and Danger with others, who no less *signally perished* : Yea, possibly, when our own Consciences told us, that we ourselves better deserved to have been made Examples of divine Severity, than they that were so.

Thus the returning *Jews* acknowledge with Gratitude the Mercy of God to them, that in the common Destruction of *Jerusalem* he had left them a Remnant to escape, and to give them a Nail in his holy Place, i. e. a little, though but a weak Fastening there. And so ought all those whom God's Judgment have left, in publick Calamities especially, like a few gleaning Grapes after the Vintage, as *Isaiah* expresseth the said Remnant of returning *Jews*.

(6.) To possess our Hearts with a *reverend* and *awful Fear* of that God, who is *terrible in his Doings towards the Children of Men*. This Use *David* made of God's Stroke upon *Uzzah* ; he was *afraid of the Lord that Day*. And the whole Christian Church, yea, the Generality of Men that heard of the unusual Deaths of *Ananias* and his *Wife*, as I before observed, were surpris'd with a *great Fear*. When God as a Lion, does but roar in his Threatnings, *who will not fear* ? says *Amos*, and much more, when (as his contemporary Prophet expresseth it) he *tears like a young Lion*, does he expect, certainly, that all Men should *serve him with Fear*, and even those that *rejoice before him*, in the most festival Exercises of Religion,

igion, wherein Joy was Part of the Service required, should do it *with Trembling*? Thus are *Christian Gentiles* taught, upon Consideration of the noted Severities of God towards his former People the *Jews*, *not to be high-minded, but fear*; as also the *Christian Jews*, upon the Remembrance of the Severities of God towards their Forefathers under the Law, in the very Delivery whereof *Moses* himself said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*, are called on by the same Apostle, to *serve him with Reverence and godly Fear*; as considering, that not only Mount *Sinai*, but Mount *Sion* also had its Thundrings, and the Gospel its Terrors, as well as the Law; so that Offenders *against him that speaks from Heaven*, shall not escape more than they that *despised him that spake on Earth*; nay, shall rather be punished with more Severity, because the God of *Christians*, as well as *Jews*, is, if provoked, *a consuming Fire*; and not to be met, as *Isaiah* expresseth it, by *Thorns and Briars set in Array against him, lest he go through them, and burn them together*.

(7.) *Lastly*, to improve that Fear for our future Caution; that taking Warning by his noted Severities towards others, we give him no Occasion, by the same or like Provocations, to take us in Hand next; but especially are we to take Heed of those Sins in particular, against which we are evidently convinced God hath given *publick Testimonies* by any remarkable *Judgments*: Which is the Use the *Apostle* tells us we ought to make of the great *Judgments* of God, against the old *Israelites*, left us upon Record in Scripture. *All those Things*, which there he reckons up, *befell them*, says he, *for Examples, and were written for our Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come*; to the Intent, as he implies it in several Instances, that we *should not lust, or commit Idolatry, or Fornication, or tempt Christ, or murmur*, as they did, for Fear of the same or like *Judgments*.

And

And the like End surely God aims at, in those Judgments which fall out in any Age, or Part of the World, to admonish Men to repent of, and for the future, abstain from those Courses, which, as it were, after Violence to his Patience and Long-suffering, and extort those notable Severities from him, by the audacious Importunity of their notorious Impieties.

And in all such Cases the *wise Man* (in *Solomon's* Phrase) *will bear, and increase in Learning*, by fortifying himself against all Temptations to those Sins, against which he seeth the Hand of God so notably *lifted up*. So that, if among all the jolly Crew of *sottish Drunkards*, but now and then one *break his Neck* in his Drunkenness, or by a *Cup Quarrel* lose his Life; (tho' withal many such should escape such Ends, even so many as to give Countenance to the *profane Proverb*, that *drunken Men come by no Harm*) yet the prudent Man will lay those few contrary Instances to Heart, and say in himself, *Why should I not fear, if I despise such Warnings, that I made the next Example in that Kind?* If there be a signal Instance in his Age, and within his Observation of a noted cruel *Oppressor*, upon whose Estate and House the Curse of God remarkably descends, so that his Posterity are either all *buried in Death*, *i. e.* die obscurely, so as to be missed by scarce any body; or if any of them survive, they are *not satisfied with Bread*; but the great Estates gotten by unlawful Means, melt away like Wax before the Sun, e'er inherited by the *third Generation*; the serious Observer will learn, not to *envy him, nor chuse any of his Ways*.

If the Examples should be more rare, than in these Days they are, of a debauched *Prodigal* spending all his *Living with Harlots*, and by Means of whorish Women reduced from an ample Estate to a *Piece of Bread*: Or of some other Sinners in the same Kind, whose *Flesh and Body are consumed with a loathsome Disease*, thereby receiving in themselves (in the Phrase

of the Apostle, concerning Uncleanness in another Kind) *that Recompence of their Error which was meet*: The considering Man will say with himself, *What Security have I, that the same Sin, if I follow it, will not reduce me to the same Case?* If but *the Field of a Sluggard be overgrown with Thorns, and Nettles cover the Face thereof, i. e.* his worldly Estate goes backward for Want of honest Industry, a wise Solomon will consider it, and receive Instruction. If the daring and audacious Appeals of a bold Sinner to God in fearful Curses upon himself; or profane Affectations of a new uncouth Way of Gallantry, by inventing new *Imprecations* against himself; or the malicious Shooting of *bitter Words* as Arrows in evil Wishes against others; amongst Men that *love Cursing*; do but once or twice in an Age meet with a suitable Stroke of divine Severity, and *Cursing come into the Cursers Bowels like Water, and as Oil into his Bones*: A considerate Christian will take Heed, that he *offend not thus with his Tongue*; and by a solemn Purpose, *as with a Bridle, keep his Mouth from transgressing* in that Manner.

In a Word, when all the Places of Execution in a Nation become Pulpits, whence the miserable Malefactors from their own woeful Experience, preach *Recantation Sermons*, wherein they renounce the evil Principles they have lived by, and warn all Men of the dangerous Consequences of licentious and debauched Courses: And the same Doctrine be also as frequently preached from the Death-Beds of other Sinners, wherein the *Curses written in God's Book* are verified in the Eyes and Ears of all Men, except they wilfully shut them both; who, but a desperately forlorn Wretch, will dare say *in his Heart, I shall have Peace, though I walk in the Imagination of mine own Heart*; i. e. gratify my own sinful Inclinations to Satiety, as one that *adds Drunkenness to Thirst*? Against such an one, surely, if any such there be, *the Anger of the*

the Lord and his Jealousy may well smoke, yea, and burn, as he elsewhere threatens, to the lowest Hell; the Place appointed for them, says the Verse following my Text, that under such evident Tokens to remember him by, forget God. And justly may God make them Examples themselves, whom the Examples of others will not amend, as being guilty of tempting his Justice beyond all Possibility of Forbearance, by the ungrateful abusing of that Patience that should have led them to Repentance, of daring Presumption upon that Lenity and Goodness which only hath given them that merciful Reprieve, by which their forfeited Souls are held in Life; of monstrous Hardness and Impenitency of Heart, whereby they treasure up to themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; and lastly, of prodigious Madness, and desperate Fool-hardiness, when, as notwithstanding the fearful Instances in all Ages, by which God hath taught the World, that none ever hardened himself against him, and prospered; yet, as if they would wrestle a Fall, or fight a Duel with the Almighty, they run upon him even in his Neck, and on the thick Bosses of his Bucklers. Believe it, Sinner, believe it, for Truth itself hath spoken it, though God spare thee awhile, and execute not Sentence speedily against thy wicked Works; though he be slow to Anger, and endure with much Long-suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction, as not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance; yet will he not finally suffer his holy Spirit to be vexed, his Patience to be trampled upon, his Word and its Warnings to be despised, and his exemplary Executions to be entertained only as News, without any farther Effect; but if the Wicked turn not, he will whet his Sword, he will bend his Bow, and make it ready, and prepare for him the Instruments of Death; and when he hath stirred up all his Wrath, which yet in his great
Com-

Compassion he forbears, he will wound the Head of his Enemies, and the hairy Scalp of all such as go on still in their Trespases; and either here or hereafter make them feel by Experience, who without feeling would not believe it, what a fearful Thing it is to fall into the Hands of the living God. From which doleful Experience God keep us all, for Jesus Christ his Sake. Amen.

FINIS

12 AP 58



